HISTORY OF KANNADA LITERATURE

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R. S. MUGALI



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PREFACE

One of the important projects that the Sahitya Akademi has undertaken is to publish a history of the literature produced in the languages recognised by it. The history is normally first written in the language concerned or in English and then translated into other languages. When the entire project is complete, one can obtain a broad view of the essential unity of Indian literature, which is obscured by difference of language, script and setting. It is believed that this will pave the way for national integration through literature.

As a part of this project, I was entrusted by the Sahitya Akademi with the task of writing a history of Kannada Literature in Kannada. I completed the task in 1960 and the book was published in 1965. A few years ago, the Sahitya Akademi asked me to render it into English with such alterations and additions as I deemed necessary.

The book was originally written in Kannada according to a general outline, prepared by the Sahitya Akademi for all the volumes in the series of Histories of Literature. It was laid down that these volumes should contain a historical and critical survey of both old and modern literature supported by apt illustrations. It should not, however, be burdened with unnecessary details and lengthy discussions, as it was meant to serve as an introduction to literary history in the language concerned for the common reader.

I have attempted in the original book and in its rendering into English to follow the guidelines, laid down by the Sahitya Akademi. The English rendering is being published here. I hope that it will serve the purpose for which it is meant and will receive wider attention in India and abroad.

Modern literature is continuously growing. New trends and styles come into vogue. It is but natural that in a literary history written upto a certain period of time, the survey of modern literature becomes out-dated and surpassed by later events. It can be brought up-to-date only when there is an occasion for bringing out a new edition. That is rather a slow process in respect of such books, considering the fact that interest in literary histories other than in

one's own language has yet to be fostered on a wide scale among the reading section of the public. I presume that such omissions as may be found in the survey of modern Kannada Literature in this book will be properly understood by all concerned.

I am grateful to the authorities of the Sahitya Akademi for entrusting this work to me. I am indebted to Sri L. S. Seshagiri Rao for the help he rendered in improving the manner of presentation in English.

I thank the Wesley Press for the neat printing and nice get-up of the book.

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Chapter I

THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF KANNADA LANGUA

In the long and rich history of Indian literature Kannada can claim to have a literary tradition, which is old, continuous and diverse in theme and expression. From the very beginning it has not been immune from influences of Indian culture nor has it been free from regional influences. At times its highest utterances have revealed a beautiful synthesis of Indian and regional elements. An intimate knowledge of the language and literature of his region should be a source of inspiration to a Kannadiga. An acquaintance with the same may prove interesting to Indians and other lovers of literature the world over.

Kannada is one of the principal languages of South India. It is spoken by over twenty million people. Adequate evidence is lacking to judge its antiquity.. And yet there is sufficient testimony to show that Kannada has been in existence for at least two thousand years. Ptolemy, a Greek geographer and traveller of the 1st Century A.D. has listed place-names, corresponding to Bādāmi, Kalakēri, Mudgal etc. Some of them are pure Kannada words. '*Punnāta*' indicating the name of a sub-region of the Kannada country, is a Kannada word and appears as '*Pounnata*' in Ptolemy. Kannada words are mentioned in an anthology of Prākrit verse, compiled by Hālarāja of 200 A.D. Karnātaka and Kuntala, which signify the Kannada country are referred to more than once in the Mahābhārata. Karnāta occurs in Pānini's grammar as Karnādhaka. The word 'Karunādagan' meaning a person belonging to Karnātaka is used in one of the earliest poetical works in the Tamil language ascribed to the early Christian era. There has been much speculation about the origin of the term 'Karnātaka'. For example, Karnātaka is said to be the Sanskritised form of Karnādu, the land of the black soil or of Kammitu nādu, meaning the land of fragrance of flower and sandalwood. To this writer, it seems to have been derived from Karunādu, i.e. the high or big country. 'Karnādu' shrank in course of time into Kannādu and finally into Kannada, meaning both the language and the land of the people speaking that language. Later, Kannada became Kanara and finally Kanarese in the speech of the westerner, probably on the analogy of Portugese.

In the opinion of some scholars, writing in Kannada began in the 1st century A.D. or even earlier. But we have reliable evidence of its

use from the 5th century A.D. We come across edicts and epigraphs in Sanskrit or Prākrit found in Kannada country right from the time of Emperor Aśoka. However, inscriptions in the Kannada script and language belong to the early centuries of the Christian era. The earliest edict in Kannada was found in a place called Halmidi and the accepted date of this is 500 A.D. It is clear from this inscription that Kannada had attained the status of a cultivated language prior to the 5th century and also that it was considerably influenced by Sanskrit. It contains some forms of older Kannada as well. A large number of Kannada epigraphs belonging to the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. have been brought to light. Some of them do have a literary quality. They contain archaic forms and terms of expression. There is reliable evidence to indicate the existence of Kannada works from the 6th century onwards. The first extant work in Kannada, viz., *Kavirājamārga* was written in 900 A.D. In this work and elsewhere one finds ample evidence to show the existence of works in Kannada from 500 A.D. On the whole, it may be said with certainty that Kannada as a language has been in vogue for the last 2,000 years and has passed through different stages and grown into a full-fledged tongue. It has a vast and varied literature of an antiquity of at least 1,500 years. Even if one were to take into account only the available material, Kannada literature is a thousand years old.

Kannada belongs to the Dravidian family of languages along with Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam. All these four languages are related to each other in respect of some of the essential aspects of grammar and diction, indicating a common origin. They have received nourishment from Sanskrit in varying degrees and yet they are not derived from Sanskrit. What then is the parent of these and similar languages? According to some, Tamil which is the oldest in the family is the parent language. Dravida is taken to be a Sanskritised form of Tamil. But it has been shown that Kannada and other Dravidian languages contain some words and forms which are more ancient than Tamil. It is, therefore, better to presume in the present state of our knowledge that there was a proto-Dravidian language, nearer to Tamil but different from it, and that Tamil, Kannada and other languages of this group had their origin in it and branched off later, developing in their own way and receiving sustenance from Sanskrit to a greater or lesser extent.

Kannada is very close to Tamil among the languages of the Dravidian family. This close relationship becomes more apparent as we move back from modern to old Kannada. Kannada and Telugu are not so closely related to each other. Many factors determine the inter-relation of languages, which originate from the same parent language. The main factor is, of course, variation in the degree of intimacy of contact. And this variation itself is due to changing conditions of time and space, over which no one has any control. The member of a family, who is the first to depart to a far-off place and lead an independent life, ceases to have contact with the rest of the

family and comes under other influences in the new environment. The longer the separation, the lesser is the contact with the family and the greater is the exposure to other impacts. From this point of view, the statement that the very first language to separate from the common stock was Telugu and that Tamil and Kannada separated later and Malayalam branched off from Tamil afterwards merits serious consideration. Along with it, one has to consider geographical and political factors as well and understand the nature and extent of the contact and influence of languages other than the parent language. We have no record to determine the form of Kannada after its separation from the parent stock. From such evidence as we have, we can only infer that it was probably an older form of old Kannada, very close to Tamil. Being a spoken dialect only, it could hardly have contained any elements of Sanskrit or Prākrit. Later on, when it was developing into a written language with a cultivated literary style, it might have consciously imbibed the influences of Sanskrit and Prākrit. Our knowledge of Kannada actually begins with our study of direct sources in the form of inscriptions, disclosing a stage of its development when these influences were already at work. Of what nature it was earlier is only a matter of speculation. We are, however, in a position to know from numerous inscriptions and works how Kannada grew and what changes it underwent in the historical period posterior to the first available inscription. All this material is mostly in written Kannada. Though we come across some forms of spoken Kannada in this vast treasure of writing, it must be admitted that we do not get an account of its variety and progress. Therefore, it is necessary to bear in mind that whenever we speak of the growth of Kannada, or for that matter, of any language in our country, we mainly refer to its written records, in which the style is more or less literary. It is only in the present period that we are able to understand the nature of spoken as well written language through literature. Thus the present age offers all material for a thorough study of language dynamism.

We may state some general principles regarding the relationship between the colloquial form and the cultivated form of language. The cultivated form develops by imparting a kind of stability and polish to the spoken dialect. Sometimes it may become stilted and heavy but it has its base in the colloquial form of speech. The cultivated language does not change with the same momentum as the colloquial language. This is all the more so in a tradition-loving country like India. The literary style lags behind with a certain sense of pride and obstinacy at a time when the colloquial form will have marched forward. When the gulf between the two widens, there are bound to be convulsive reactions in progressive circles, as a result of which the two are brought together with a vengeance. Gradually a contrary reaction sets in and they are again separated from each other. Kannada has not been an exception to these general laws of change. Still, broadly speaking it is a language which has tried to avoid extremes and

to strike a balance between tradition and innovation. The pioneer writers evolved a cultivated style of writing on the basis of the forms of speech then current. They were fascinated by the wealth and charm of Sanskrit. But they did not surrender the genius of Kannada. In some of their writing the actual performance might have at times belied their own profession but their vision was clear. As time rolled on, some of the poets of lesser calibre fell a prey to pedantry and got lost in the jungle of Sanskrit diction and *double entendre*, thus moving far away from the language of everyday life. As a natural reaction to this excess, some other poets raised aloft the banner of the people's language. That itself was built as a cultivated, literary form without heaviness or unnaturalness attached to it. Nevertheless, it must be confessed that the difference between the cultivated and colloquial forms is rather excessive in Kannada as we know it in the modern period.

Broadly speaking, Kannada has had two written forms, known as the old Kannada and new Kannada. Old Kannada was in vogue from the 9th to the 12th century A.D. It was followed by new Kannada which took definite shape in the 12th century though its faint beginning can be traced to the 11th century. New Kannada did not completely replace old Kannada. Some works continued to be written in old Kannada in the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. It, however, dwindled in importance in the 15th and 16th centuries. It revived in the 17th and 18th centuries under the patronage of the rulers of Mysore. New Kannada came into its own in the 19th and 20th centuries. Even so, it is not right to divide the history of Kannada language into two periods, viz. old and new. It is true that old Kannada alone held the field till about the middle of the 12th century. If this period were to be named after old Kannada, it would mean that it died out at the end of the period, which is far from true. Besides, certain elements of old Kannada with what we call new Kannada were mixed up in different proportions so that it would be a wrong assumption that there was a China wall separating the two. Old Kannada is known for compactness and precision. Some of the case-terminations and conjugational endings are peculiar to it. Its peculiarity does not consist in this only. Actually a large number of these grammatical features have persisted in new Kannada with slight modifications. But old Kannada is different from new Kannada in the way the case-terminations are fused with primary words and in the final forms of the words. In old Kannada, primary words and forms are by and large consonant-ending whereas in new Kannada they are vowel-ending. The compactness of old Kannada is heightened by the operation of the rules of junction (Sandhi rules), which are typical of Kannada grammar as distinguished from Sanskrit. Different forms are so intertwined with each other that they very often appear as one form. Not that new Kannada is free from this kind of fusion. But it is less compact on account of the vowel-ending primary words. The following are some of the other features which distinguish old from new Kannada.

Old Kannada	New Kannada
Dissimilar conjuncts (Irdam)	Similar conjuncts (Iddanu)
Words with nunnation (Kūndal)	Words without nunnation (Kūdalu)
Use of the 'p' phoneme (Pāl)	Substitution of the 'h'-phoneme (Hālu)
Use of old 'r' and old 'l' (keṟe -Maḷe)	Omission of old 'r' and 'l' (Kere, Maḷe)

The formation of verbal forms by appending conjugational endings to noun-roots is another peculiar feature of old Kannada. For instance, the addition of the suffix 'en' to the noun-root 'Kesavan' gives the form 'Kesavanen', meaning 'I am Kesava'. Similarly, 'Piriyarevu' means 'We are elders'.

In the opinion of some scholars, Kannada had an earlier stage than old Kannada, which may be called 'the earlier old Kannada'. In the opinion of some others, new Kannada was preceded by another stage, called 'nadugannada' or middle Kannada. According to these notions, Kannada language has had three stages in its growth. If we accept as stages earlier Kannada and middle Kannada along with old and new Kannada, we have to posit four stages in all. It is necessary to understand what we mean by a stage before we proceed to demarcate the stages in the development of Kannada as a language. Changes do take place in a language from time to time. The main question is of what nature and magnitude should these changes be to justify the designation of a stage. It is well-nigh impossible to lay down rules, that will apply to all languages. But one can set forth some general principles to serve as guidelines. Changes in a language do not attract notice as they take place. That a language can be said to have reached a new stage when the changes invite attention is one principle. But this is rather general and vague. The questions that arise are, what manner of changes should attract notice? And whose notice ? When is the time set for deciding that a stage has been reached? We must seek answer to these questions. A detailed discussion is not necessary in the present context. In brief, it is our view that when changes in a language turn out to be deep and stabilised though varying in extent, a new stage may be considered to have set in. Then it attains the status of a tradition, acceptable to all. Before this happens, there is a transitional stage, which looks like a stage but only heralds it. This is the period of experimental forms. They do not, however, receive the stamp of general acceptance. Only some of them survive and strike root. Thus the transitional stage is marked by a certain uncertainty and mix-up of old and new forms. Stability and flux are inevitable in any language. And yet flux is dominant in the transitional stage, whereas stability predominates in what may be

called a settled stage. A kind of movement is visible in changes that take place before the setting in of the regular stage, creating an awareness of the emergence of a new stage. Actually, however, it will not be proper to name a stage until change yields to stability.

If this view is correct, old and new Kannada may be taken as the only two stages of the language, earlier old Kannada and middle Kannada only marking the transitions. Earlier Kannada is mostly old Kannada, containing certain forms and features, which old Kannada shed later. Even they are found only in inscriptions dating from 600 to 800 A.D. No written works of this age have come down to us. Besides, it has been noted that forms of old Kannada are found at times interspersed with forms of earlier Kannada. A salient feature of earlier Kannada is the elongation of the vowel in verbal and nominal forms. It appears to have crept into older Kannada as the relic of the spoken language of distant past and as a symbol of dignity in speech. It survived as an experimental feature and disappeared after some time. In the middle Kannada, change of consonant-endings to vowel-endings is a harbinger of new Kannada. On the whole, it may be broadly stated that middle Kannada was to new Kannada what earlier Kannada was to old Kannada.

Each league, they say, brings a new dialect. The same language has variations in respect of sound, word and meaning in different regions. This is as true of Kannada today as it was in the past. *Kavirājamārga* of the 9th century, the first available work on poetics in Kannada, states that even god Ādiśēṣa of many tongues could not make out what was correct and what was incorrect among the Kannada dialects of the time. The regional variations in spoken Kannada have gone on increasing on account of geographical and political factors. They have been accentuated by the lack of mutual contact and by the increasing impact of other languages, mainly on the border. The Kannada-speaking people, who were united under one rule, were broken up after the fall of the Vijayanagar Empire. Kannada language and culture were orphaned in all parts of Karnātaka except in old Mysore. Having been subject to the excessive influence of other languages on the border and at times in the interior also, Kannada lost its original power; in fact, it gradually lost the consciousness of its own genius. Surprisingly enough, more than one thousand years after *Kavirāja-mārga* was written, even today we hear the talk about many Kannada dialects in Karnātaka. It appears to be truer today than even before. One feels for a moment that the author of *Kavirājamārga* wrote with prophetic foresight. But fortunately a new outlook dawned on the Kannada people at the dawn of the present century and as a result of persistent endeavour, Karnātaka has by and large come under one administration as a part of the Indian nation. The dialects of Kannada are moving closer as are the Kannada-speaking people. It may not be too much to hope that in course of time considerable similarity, which is generally observed today in the written language, will manifest in the spoken language as well. The children of Karnātaka are like the

disinherited and scattered members of a royal family, whom providence has brought together again.

Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayālam are the main languages of the Dravidian stock, which have grown from dialects into written languages. Some other languages of this family remained as dialects without further development. Among these, Tulu, Kodagu, Havyaka, Totha, Kōta, and Badaga are considered closer to Kannada than to other languages. It may well be questioned if they are really dialects of Kannada. Some of them might have been just regional variants of Kannada. But they did not move up on the ladder of progress and could not attain to any literary status. They help in the historical study of the oldest forms of Kannada. The Kannadiga of today cannot, however, fully understand them. A few of them might even seem to be entirely different languages. Tulu is spoken largely in South Kanara or Mangalore District of Karnātaka. Kodagu is used in Coorg. Havyaka is spoken in south and north Kanara. It contains clear traces of old Kannada. Totha, Kota and Badaga are spoken by the original inhabitants of Neelagiri or Ootackmund. Of these three dialects, Badaga resembles old Kannada to a great extent. The letters r̤ and l̤ which have disappeared from modern Kannada have survived in the Badaga dialect in different forms. It is strange and yet true that a dialect called 'Brahui', prevalent in Baluchistan in far-off north western frontier is replete with Dravidian elements. Scholars are of opinion that it is closer to Kannada and Tulu than to the other languages of the family.[1] If this is confirmed by further research, Brahui may be regarded as another dialect of Kannada. We have said before that Kannada was sustained in its growth by Sanskrit and Prakrit. This is not to say that Kannada was devoid of inherent sustaining vitality. Tamil had this vitality and did display it. Kannada also could have developed in its own way but it chose a middle path. It consisted in retaining the original genius of Kannada and imbibing at the same time the essence of Sanskrit. Here do we see a manifestation of the synthesising or impartial spirit inherent in Kannada culture.

It may be that in early times Kannada accepted the influence of Sanskrit by sheer necessity and had little choice. A growing language draws nourishment from another language which has devloped earlier than itself. Kannada had not grown as strong as Tamil. Besides, it had little contact with Tamil at the time. At this juncture Sanskrit came to Kannada like a beacon-light of Aryan culture and lighted its path. It had a developed vocabulary, ready at hand to meet the demands of religion, philosophy, science and myth. Kannada accepted it unreservedly. Sanskrit thus helped Kannada to rise to its full stature. But generally speaking, Kannada did not develop a fascination

[1] Denys Bray: The Brahui Language, Part II, p. 19 'Comparative Phonology thus points to Brahui being closer to Kanarese and Tulu, than to Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu, closer still to Kurukh and Malto',

for Sanskrit at the cost of its individuality. One of the reasons for this was its affinity with Prakrit. Just as Sanskrit was ushered in as the language of Vedic religion, Prakrit was introduced as the vehicle of Buddhism and Jainism. Kannada welcomed both. Jainism, in particular, struck deep roots in the Kannada soil and left its impress on the political and cultural life of Karnātaka. Jain saints and savants were fully conversant with both Sanskrit nad Prākrit. They loved Sanskrit and knew it thoroughly but their love never became blind infatuation. Some of them grew accustomed to reading and writing religious works in Prākrit. It was an article of faith with them that religious discourse must be in the language of the people. They had no traditional weakness for Sanskrit as divine speech and as the sole vehicle of literary composition. They were fortunate in having kings who were on their side. As a result of this combination of learning and authority, Kannada grew with a generally balanced outlook. Literature in Kannada started earlier and grew faster than one could imagine.

In daily usage, Kannada is mostly self-reliant but it cannot function without Sanskrit. The word for water, 'neeru' is its own but the word for food, 'anna' is Sanskrit. When one does not want a meal, one needs the Sanskrit '*Phalāhāra* (light refreshments). After a hard day's work, one needs sleep and the word for it is borrowed from Sanskrit (nidre-nidde). '*Dēvaru*, *dharma*, *pāpa*, *punya*—these and such other Sanskrit words have become part and parcel of Kannada language. In very early times, *Aṛa* (Dharma), *Poḷtu* (Kāla) *Nēsar* (Sūrya)—words of this type were in vogue in Kannada but they went out of currency as a result of Sanskritic influence. They have remained in old works as relics of a bygone age. The use of Sanskrit diction in the speech of the unsophisticated people is relatively less but its influence is deep and abiding. Some of the words, which have been assimilated in the language of the common man in their original or corrupt form, are hardly recognisable as Sanskrit. It is noteworthy that a good number of Sanskrit words have changed their meaning in Kannada usage. Sometimes in Kannada the word means something different from or the very opposite of what it means in Sanskrit. It is possible to account for this semantic change. One finds that from the very beginning, a certain viewpoint prevailed both among poets and critics that there should be a limit to borrowing words and grammatical elements from Sanskrit and even those that were borrowed must be adapted to the genius of the Kannada language. *Kavirājamārga* of 900 A.D. gave the guideline in this respect by laying down that the words that Kannada borrowed from Sanskrit were to be termed as *Samasamskṛta*. '*Samasamskṛta*' is a significant term, meaning 'Sanskrit words which are made "sama" i.e. processed properly before they are ushered into Kannada.' It appears that this rule was in vogue even before *Kavirājamārga*. But this work laid it down as a definite directive, which all future poets generally tried to follow. But a living and growing language cannot be subject to

rigid rules. There are bound to be exceptions to the rule. Adverbial phrases of Sanskrit, which were forbidden in Kannada usage without becoming component parts of compound words, got into currency as they were. Compounds words, comprising one Sanskrit element and one Kannada element, were formerly banned as *arisamasas* i.e. hostile compounds; but later turned out to be *mitrasamasas* i.e., friendly compounds and were adopted, being sanctified by usage and tradition. The *Samasamskṛta* viewpoint called for slight changes in the vowel-ends or consonant-ends of Sanskrit words adapted to suit the genius of the Kannada language and made noun-bases. For example, Mālā (Māle), Lakṣmī (Laksmi), Sarayū (Sarayu), Yaśas (yaśa, yaśassu), Div (Diva), Vidvān (Vidwānsa), Śrimān (Śrimanta), Praśna (Praśne). This was one way of bringing Sanskrit words into the Kannada fold by just slight changes. Another way was to make bigger changes, affecting the entire word in consonance with the laws of Kannada phonetics. Words of the first category were styled as *Samasamskṛta* and of the second category as *Apabhramśa* or *Tadbhava.* Actually *Tadbhave* words may be treated as examples of an extension of the principle underlying *Samasamskṛta.* The principle is, that when one language borrows words from another, they have to be modified if necessary to suit the genius and phonetic character of the borrowing language. According to this principle, when we modify Sanskrit words and put on them the stamp of Kannada, they become *Tadbhavas*. They may be called *Apabhramśa* or corrupt words from the point of view of Sanskrit but they are Tadbhavas or modifications from the standpoint of Kannada. These *tadbhavas* were so naturalised in Kannada diction that grammarians and poets called them pure Kannada (*Accakannada*) along with words of indigenous origin. The term *Accakannada* acquired a wider meaning. It is obvious that the formation of *tadbhavas* was governed by certain phonetic rules. For instance, dissimilar conjuncts become either similar or disjoined (Samskṛta-Sakkaḍa, Śri-Siri). One consonant in the conjuncts dropped out (Snēha-Nēha, Sthāna-tāna). Y was changed into J, Ś, into S, (Yamunā-Jamunā). (Śasi-sasi, Ṛṣi-Risi). In this manner tadbhavas were formed with modifications necessary to suit Kannada intonation and make them softer than Sanskrit at times. The question arises whether they came to Kannada direct or through Prākrit. *Samskṛitasama*, *Samskṛtabhava*, *Prākṛtasama* and *Prākṛtabhava*— these are the four kinds of words enumerated in Telugu. In Kannada also, two kinds of tadbhavas, viz. *Prakṛtasama* and *Prakṛtabhava* are recognised.[1] In general, it may be stated that most of the tadbhavas have entered Kannada through Prakrit. Jaina poets and scholars, who were the pioneers of writing in Kannada, were well-versed in Samskrit as well as Prākrit. They drew inspiration from both the languages and enriched the Kannada vocabulary by naturalizing the words they borrowed in Kannada. It seems that they drew on

[1] R. Narasimhacharya: History of Kannada Language, pp. 116-7.

Souraśēni Prākrit for *tadbhavas* in particular. It may be proper to designate most of the tadbhavas as *Prākṛtabhava* and distinguish those of them which are identical with the Prakrit forms as *Prakritasama* from those which are different in form as *Prākṛtabhinna*. There are *tadbhavas*, which have come to Kannada in a small proportion from other languages and such *tadbhavas* will continue to appear in future. Particularly some of the tadbhavas appear to have come from Tamil like *Arasa* [Rājan (Sk)-Arasan (T) Ēṇi (Śreṇi) (Sk)-ēni (T).]

The Kannada lexicon has enriched itself with words from many a language since the inception of writing in Kannada. Of these, Sanskrit and Prākrit borrowings were predominant in the early period. Later it replenished itself with words from Marathi, Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English from time to time. It is also indebted to Tamil, Telugu and other Dravidian tongues. For any growing language it is a matter of pride to have a large stock of loan-words which do not, however, hamper the flowering of its innate genius. During its history of more than one thousand years, Kannada has tried to maintain a certain poise in this respect. And yet it must be admitted that Kannadigas could not be sufficiently self-reliant in their craze for borrowing from other languages because of the weakness in the political and cultural sphere, to which they were exposed during certain periods of their history and also because of a mistaken notion of generosity. Sanskrit became both a help and hindrance at a certain point in the development of Kannada. English seems to play the same role in the present day. If Kannada does not combine self-assertion with a progressive outlook, it cannot march forward with any degree of equanimity.

Expert opinion points to Brāhmi as the common source of all Indian alphabets. Indian languages do not belong to the same stock and yet they are all influenced by Sanskrit to a greater or lesser degree. Likewise, all the alphabets derive their origin from Brāhmi. This is one of the unifying factors on the Indian scene. The script of Aśokan edicts is the earliest form of Brāhmi. The alphabets of Devanāgari and of Dravidian languages are the modified forms of the Aśokan script through what is known as the 'cave script'. Among the Dravidian scripts, Kannada and Telugu were very close to each other until the printing press appeared on the scene when certain changes took place. There is little similarity between the scripts of Tamil and Kannada. Just as Kannada and Tamil are close to each other in respect of language, Kannada and Telugu have close resemblance in respect of their alphabets. It seems that Kannada and Tamil lived together as brothers for a fairly long time after Telugu separated from the proto-Dravidian stock. This is indicated by their close relationship in many respects. The similarity of Kannada and Telugu in respect of the script is accounted for by their long association with each other under one administration, though they are not so close in respect of language. Particularly the political affinity of Kannada and Telugu was prominent in the heyday of Vijayanagar Empire.

The Kannada script has undergone many changes in the last fifteen hundred years. Mainly the letters of the alphabet which were formerly linear and angular became circular and creeper-like. One of the reasons for this change is said to be the practice of writing works on the palm-leaf in old days. When one looks at some of the old inscriptions, one is simply charmed by their elegance and artistry. The Kannada alphabet has all the symbols needed for writing Kannada and Sanskrit words. Like Sanskrit, it has separate letters for surds, sonants and sibilants and other sounds. But it has also symbols for a few sounds peculiar to the Dravidian languages. Some opine that there are no aspirates (mahāprāṇa) in the Dravidian languages and that, therefore, they may be dropped from the alphabet. But we hold the view that so far as Kannada is concerned there are aspirates, though they are a few in number and that they must be retained in the alphabet.

CHAPTER II

OLD PERIOD—I

THE BEGINNING OF KANNADA LITERATURE

WE have indicated in the first chapter about when Kannada literature might have begun its course. We may deal with the subject here at some length.

Generally people speaking any language will have an oral tradition of song and story, which is spontaneous in expression. It may vary in quality but it does have a literary flavour. It is not reduced to writing, but lives on the tongues of men and women. As for its origin, one has to confess that it has none. There is evidence of the past to show that we had folk poetry in Kannada for long. But when we speak of the beginnings of Kannada literature, we do not take into account folk poetry, whose date is uncertain. We have in mind written records only.

Kavirājamārga is the first available work in Kannada. It dates back to the ninth century, being more than one thousand years old. At the end of every chapter of this work in verse, mention is made, in the colophon, of *Kavirājamārga* approved by Nṛpatungadēva. Nṛpatunga was the great king, Amōghavarṣa Nṛpatunga of the Rāṣṭrakūta dynasty, who reigned from 815 to 877 A.D. Whether king Nṛpatunga was the author of this work or some one else has been a subject of discussion and we shall consider this later. But the date of the work is undisputed. Though *Kavirājamārga* is the first extant work, it is not the earliest work written in Kannada. There is reliable testimony in support of this statement, some of it in *Kavirājamārga* itself. It has listed a number of well-known writers of prose and poetry. Some of them may have been the author's contemporaries, some others might have been his predecessors. Among the latter Durvineeta finds mention as a prose writer. He was a king of the Ganga dynasty belonging to the 6th century A.D. Inscriptions praise him as a versatile scholar and as the author of a commentary on the 15th canto of Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya* as also the author of *Śabdāvatāra* and *Brihatkathā* in Sanskrit. *Avantisundarīkathāsāra*, a work in Sanskrit, mentions that Bhāravi was for some time in the court of Durvinīta. Durvinīta's *Śabdavātāra* is taken to be a commentary on Panini's grammar. It may as well have been a work setting forth rules of grammar for the growing Kannada language. Another work of his may have been the first rendering into Sanskrit of Guṇādhya's Brihatkathā written in Paiśāci. It is likely that being a Kannada

author, he rendered it into Kannada as well. It is a pity that none of his works in Sanskrit or Kannada has been traced so far.

Vimalōdaya, Nāgārjuna and Jayabandhu are among the other prose writers listed in *Kavirājamārga*. We do not know about them even as much as we do about Durvinīta. Among writers of poetry, there are the names of Śrīvijaya Kaviśwara, Paṇḍita, Candra and Lōkapāla. We know next to nothing about these authors too, though there has been much speculation. It is clear from a close study of the references in *Kavirājamārga* to old poets and critics of high standing as also of the maturity of its thought and style that Kannada literature had been developing for some centuries and had come of age. The very fact that it was a work on poetics to serve as a guide to poets is testimony enough to the existence of earlier poetic creation in Kannada. Besides, there appear to be a few extracts from a *Rāmāyana* in Kannada then extant and possibly from a *Mahābhārata* in Kannada also, in the illustrative verses of the work. On the whole, one can infer on the basis of internal evidence in *Kavirājamārga* that Kannada had a considerable body of literature of some merit and had a continuing literary tradition of 4 or 5 centuries prior to that work. The antiquity of Kannada literature can be inferred from other works besides *Kavirājamārga*. Pampa of the 10th century, who is the first known great poet, avers that his work named *Samastabhārata* and *Ādipurāṇa* eclipsed all previous poems. No great poet before him, he declares, narrated the *Mahābhārata* story in a novel manner as he did. Such statements clearly suggest the existence of Kannada works earlier than *Kavirājamārga*. Added to this, are direct references to some earlier authors and works. It is known that one Tumbulūrācārya wrote his extensive commentary called *Cūdamaṇi* on Jaina philosophy in the 7th century A.D. In this very period Śyāmakundācārya wrote his *Prābhṛta* i.e., a Jaina philosophical work in Kannada. It is obvious that Jaina scholars had started writing elucidatory works in Kannada on Jaina philosophy and legend as early as the 7th century A.D. Secular writing had also made a start though on a small scale. For instance, Saigotta Śivamāra, a royal poet who was a little prior to *Kavirājamārga*, is said to have composed a minor work entitled *Gajāṣṭaka*, which became popular as a folk song. Early references to works such as *Karnātaka Kumārasambhava* and *Karnātaka Mālatīmādhava* though untraced today bespeak the growing influence of Sanskrit on Kannada literature. Some hold the view that *Vaddāradhane*, a bunch of Jaina stories in prose, is older than *Kavirājamārga*. The date of this work is uncertain though most scholars have assigned it to a period later than *Kavirājamārga*, probably the beginning of the 10th century.

The inscriptions also testify to the antiquity of writing in Kannada especially of literary writing. Epigraphs and copper plates either in Sanskrit or Prakrit and belonging to the third century B.C. have been discovered in Karnātaka. The Aśokan edicts are the earliest among them. The earliest inscription in Kannada, however, is that of Halmidi

of the 6th century A.D. It shows the deep influence of Sanskrit on Kannada writing. Its style shows clear signs of literary Kannada emerging from the oldest form of old Kannada and growing under the strong and centuries-old influence of Sanskrit. But it is not a literary piece. It is a small epigraph, giving a bare account in the usual manner of a battle and of a gift.

Its refinement suggests that Kannada had become a medium of literary composition, though literary works of this period have not come down to us. Since then, the number of Kannada inscriptions goes on increasing, particularly from the 7th century onwards. In one such, assigned to the 5th century A.D. we have the first composition in verse which may aspire to the title of poetry, delineating in a brief and vivid manner the character of Guṇamadhurānka, a hero of the day. Later in the 7th century, we come across a more graphic character-study of another hero called Mādhavan in three stanzas of three-lined tripadi metre, which appears to be the most indigenous prosodic source for folk poetry and popular verse in Kannada. The literary impress is evident in several inscriptions of the 7th century A.D., found in Śrāvaṇabeḷgola, bringing out the importance of śāntarasa, i.e. the sentiment of inner peace.

During the 9th century A.D. along with the author of *Kavirāja-mārga*, Asaga, Guṇanandi and Guṇavarma I gained renown as Kannada poets. Asaga wrote *Karnāṭaka Kumārasambhava* already mentioned, along with two classical compositions in Sanskrit. This Kannada work is not available today. The works of Guṇanandi are unknown to us though they were looked upon as standard works in his time. All that we have of his work is part of a verse, which reveals a born poet. Extracts from the two works of Guṇavarma viz., *Śūḍraka* and *Harivamsa* are found in two old anthologies of Kannada poetry. They seem to have been Campu works, anticipating the classical composition in the high-flown style of the era before Pampa.

Kavirājamārga

In Sanskrit literature, the age of Bhāsa and Kālidāsa had ended, the age of Bāṇa and Bhāravi was all in a glow. Bhāsa and Kālithāsa were objects of admiration but Bāṇa and Bhāravi were the real sources of inspiration. The author of *Kavirājamārga* was born at a time when Thanḍi and Bhāmaha held the field in the world of poetics. His date is certain but his name is a matter of dispute. According to one school of opinion, king Nṛpatunga himself was the author of this work. According to another, either Śrīvijaya or Kavīśwara, a court-poet of Nṛpatunga wrote it. There is a third view that Kavīśwara who was in the court of Nṛpatunga, wrote *Kavirājamārga* by expanding a smaller work called *Kavimārga* written by Śrīvijaya of an earlier period. A close examination of the internal evidence warrants the conclusion that the author of *Kavirājamārga* was not Nṛpatunga but a Jaina scholar-poet, who had high regard for Nṛpatunga and composed the work under his inspiration and with his approval. We do not

know for certain the name of this scholar-poet. But in all probability he was named Śrīvijaya. Among the poets mentioned in *Kavirājamārga* the name of Śrīvijaya occurs first. It is not a valid objection that the author of a work would not name himself in an indirect way. It cannot be an accident that the word Śrīvijaya occurs in the last stanza of every canto with double *entendre*. About 200 years later, Thurgasimha, author of *Pancatantra* in Kannada eulogises *Kavimārga* of Śrīvijaya explicitly as a veritable guide to students of literature. Besides, there is other evidence in support of this view. *Kavirāja-mārga* is a broad rendering of Thanḍi's well-known work on poetics viz. *Kāvyādarśa* and yet it reveals an originality of outlook in synthesizing the essential features of Kannada with those of Indian tradition. It is the first work of importance from more than one point of view. Not only is it the first available work, it is also the first work on poetics in Kannada. It contains mature thought and wisdom and amply justifies its name *Kavirājamārga* meaning the royal way of the poets, being a path-finder and guide to poets and critics now as it then was. It would not have deserved much importance had it been just a translation into Kannada of Thanḍi's *Kāvyādarśa* or an adaptation with minor alterations. Thanks to the incentive of the magnanimous king Nṛpatunga and also to the author's wide range of interests, it has come to be regarded as a lasting guide to the lover of Kannada. In this work, we have full-throated praise of *Kāthambari* and *Harṣacarita*, described as the heart of Sanskrit poetry and reference to Sanskrit poets such as Guṇaśuri, Nārāyaṇa, Bhāravi, Kālithāsa and Māgha. We have an eulogy of eminent writers of prose and verse in Kannada. Among the literary forms current in Kannada, significant mention is made of Bethande and Caṭṭāna, which were peculiar to Kannada with their prosodic pattern arising from a fusion of Sanskrit and Kannada metres. This is a testimony of a thousand years ago to the attitude and the culture of Karnātaka, always striving for a synthesis of Sanskrit and Kannada elements in all branches of activity.

The first chapter of this work contains a description of Kannada land and language with details which we get nowhere else. 'The Kannada land extended from the river Kāvēri to the Gōthāvari. The central part of this land was bounded by Kisuvoḷal, Koppaṇa, Puligere and Okkuntha, towns situated in four different directions. The people of this country were adept in appropriate speech and in the right comprehension of others' words. They were so intelligent that they could enjoy or compose poetry even without any formal study beforehand. Every person though not literate could express himself aptly. The young and the simple were capable of uttering words of wisdom. Even the unlearned could condemn works by pointing out the blemishes in them on oath.' Ignoring the exaggerated manner of statement, we have here a fairly faithful picture of the sensibility and the culture of the Kannadigas of those days. Instances taken from the past and the present will prove the veracity of this description. Another verse in the second chapter also brings out the characteristic

qualities of the Kannada people thus: 'The people of this land are very brave. They are poets and they are rulers. They are handsome and cultured. They are full of self-respect and vigour, terrible in attack and at the same time, dignified and discreet in speech and action'.

Though this work is a free rendering of the original work in Sanskrit, the critical insight of the author is evident in his original stanzas. There is no doubt that he is indebted to Sanskrit poeticians, particularly to Thaṇḍi and Bhāmaha. But in the first and second chapters of the work nearly three-fourths of the stanzas differ from the original. In the third chapter, however, there is closer adherence to the original. Even here half of the stanzas are either independent or adapted with slight variations. The true nature of poetry, its purpose, its gradation, the preparations on the part of the writer and the balance between Sanskrit and Kannada diction: these and other topics find adequate treatment in the first chapter. The work has gained importance solely on account of the maturity of the views expressed therein. The author rises in our estimation as a seasoned poetician. If he had followed the original faithfully without the least deviation, he would not have earned the praise which is now his due.

A few examples of his original approach may be pertinent. Following the source, he lists such essential gifts of a poet as genius and ingenuity. But he has his own reflections on the ways and the effect of poetry. He says, 'The poetic idea that takes shape in the mind of the poet will attract men of taste if it is presented in a new form. Otherwise who is charmed by it? That composition, which like a wreath of diamonds worn in the heart delights by constant remembrance and rumination, gains fame. Its greatness is very easy to grasp'[1]. The sum and substance of this is that poetry in the process of creation should assume new forms and should so delight that we return to it again and again and the greatness of such a poem is easy to comprehend and enjoy. The author has denounced the tendency of those poets, who borrow ideas from others and flaunt them as their own. The writing of such poets will be as useless as echo in a mountain cave. They will not acquire the proper poetic eloquence.

The author of *Kavirājamārga* has his own convincing way of expounding the degrees of poetic excellence. He, who knows how to unlock another's heart as he intends, is one who understands speech. He who can convey much meaning in a small compass is abler than the first one. He who can weave his utterance into a rhythmic pattern is even more skilful. He who can compose a classic spontaneously without a pause is the greatest of all. Among men on earth, some are orators, some others are wise epigrammatists, some among them are weavers of rhythms. Only a few among them are the greatest as they combine all the qualities in themselves[2]. It is noteworthy how much of experience of life and discernment of literary art have gone into

[1] Kavirājamārga: 1-12, 13.
[2] Ibid., 1-15, 16,17.

such an utterance. A great poet must possess all the essential qualities, that excellent writing demands. He should have a comprehensive and integrated vision of life. His genius should be all-embracing. The orator's eloquence, the epigrammatist's gift of aphorism, the mastery of rhythm of the verse-writer—it is by a combination of all these powers that he can produce a great work of art. These words spoken over a thousand years ago by the author of *Kavirājamārga* are an undying testimony to his power of original and mature thinking. The author of *Kavirājamārga* has borrowed definitions from Daṇḍi and other rhetoricians who went before him but has given illustrations which are either his own or which give a new turn. One can see his poetic ability and his sense of propriety in analogies and illustrations. such as these: 'even a small blemish will spoil the entire beauty of the work, just as a black spot will spoil the entire beauty of the eye. Just as the eyes cannot see the collyrium applied to them, so also the poet cannot see his own faults. That is why one should have one's work read by another discerning critic. The commingling of Sanskrit adverbial phrases with Kannada words will produce a cacophony like the harsh sound of a two-faced drum. If we form compound words with Sanskrit and Kannada components, it will be like adding drops of butter-milk to hot milk'.

It is evident from examples such as these that this author had mastered the technique of enlivening canons of criticism. It is true that most of the thought-content in this work was taken from Sanskrit poetics but there are one or two points which are his own. Daṇḍi mentions eight rasas only, whereas this author mentions nine, including *Śāntarasa.* It is obvious that by the time this work was written, Śānta was accepted as a *rasa* in Kannada poetry and criticism owing to Jaina influence. It is in this work that *dhwani* has been reckoned as a figure of speech (*Alankāra*) and has been illustrated accordingly. There is no basis for it in Daṇḍi or Bhāmaha. According to *Kavirāja-mārga*, even small children used to speak words of wisdom. If so, what words of wisdom should drop from the lips of a man of ripe experience as the author of this work? Whether it be the mixture of Kannada and Sanskrit words, mutual relations of languages, or the nature of the ideal style, we get examples of wise utterance. Particularly in the third chapter, we come across certain illustrations, that reveal the author's political sagacity and breadth of outlook. For example, 'the merit of a minister lies in adumbrating a policy before people become aware it. Will it redound to his credit if he were to say that it was the correct policy like a mountain echo, when every one had started talking about it? If a person were to take a burden on himself and then ask what would be its consequence, he would be behaving like the stupid one, who first got himself shaved and then enquired what day it was. If fate is against a person, he should not undertake a task although the policy is in his favour. If he does undertake it under unfavourable circumstances, it will be as good as obliging a dead person. If one were to neglect an enemy and not

destroy him because he was small fry, he will grow big in course of time and strike hard, like small specks of cloud which grow big and shroud the sun. .... Real wealth consists in bearing with another's thought and religion. What is life if it is not built on the solid foundation of virtue? Let everybody be absorbed in the performance of his duty without caring whether people praise or blame him, with his mind fixed on good in this world and in the next'. Thoughts such as these exemplify the pragmatic sense and the mature understanding of the author of *Kavirājamārga*. They hold the mirror up to the culture of India of more than thousand years ago which manifested itself in a work, which is now the first extant one in the Kannada language.

Vaḍḍārādhane

Vaḍḍārādhane is an unsolved riddle to the literary world for more than one reason. What is the exact title of the work? What is the name of its author? When was it written? We have yet to find final answers to these questions. There have been divergent views about its date. Nevertheless it is possible to surmise on the basis of some internal evidence that it might have been written by one Śivakōtyācārya in the first three decades of the 10th century. We regard it as the second available work, next to *Kavirājamārga* and the first collection of stories in Kannada prose, which has come down to us.

A research scholar of eminence held that it could not be later than the 6th century on account of the existence of archaic forms in its style. Another scholar opined that it might have been written between the 8th and 11th century, mainly because of one or two quotations of a later date found included in it. A third scholar has come to the conclusion that it was, very likely, a prose work of the first few decades of the 10th century. The principal reason for this view is that we have some relatively modern forms of language along with old forms in this work. Such a mixture was not possible in ancient works. It is, however, possible that old forms may be included in new works either for creating an illusion of antiquity or for the maintenance of an old tradition.

Vaḍḍārādhane means great *sādhanā* or practice. Jain ascetics always practised the four ideals of knowledge, belief, conduct and penance, particularly at the time of Sallēkhanā vow. In the observance of this vow, the ascetic willingly embraces death, which is known as *Samāḍhimaraṇa*. All this sādhanā is known as Ārādhanā. Gradually the philosophic discussions and religious stories which were narrated at the time of the *Ārādhanā* also came to be called by the same name. There are 19 such stories in *Vaḍḍārādhane*. They were so called because of the large number of stories and their length, '*vaḍḍa*' meaning big and extensive. There are several works in Sanskrit and Prākrit known as *Ārādhanā*. It seems that the narrator of the stories in Kannada had a Prākrit original before him.

There is a Sanskrit work called *Kathākōśa* by Hariśēna, which might have followed the same source. All the nineteen stories in *Vaḍḍārādhane* resemble the stories in *Kathākōśa*; only the order of the stories is different. In some places the resemblance between the two is very close. And yet the stories in *Vaḍḍārādhane* are generally longer and include certain original details. It may therefore be assumed that *Vaḍḍārādhane* might have independently developed details in the course of narration though it was indebted to the source for the story-content and for some ideas and sentences here and there. In those days, writers on the whole did not wish to make change in story material, particularly of religious importance. This does not, however, mean that *Vaḍḍārādhane* is a verbatim translation. It is a rendering of source-material with its own flavour and effortless narration. The author of *Vaḍḍārādhane* had the happy knack of developing a borrowed story in a lively manner. Even a little detail brightens the story and suggests in a subtle way the author's understanding of human nature. For instance, in the story of Sukumāraswāmi, after the death of his minister, for whom he had high regard, the king sent for the two sons of the minister and asked them how far they were educated. Both of them hung their heads down and could make no reply. With tearful eyes they stood silent, writing something on the ground with their toes. The description nicely suggests the overpowering sense of distress of the youths, who were ashamed to admit that they, the minister's sons, had no education. The innuendo in the description of the young men who could not write and so wrote on the ground is like exquisite artistry in ivory-carving. Śivakōṭyācārya has thus infused life into these conventional and complicated stories by deft and lively touches and by the charm of the dialogue. It is possible that the connecting links of the story get lost here and there and that sometimes the stories may lack variety and fail to interest the reader. But their attractiveness is in no way impaired. Some of the stories are too short, some others are lengthy. The very short stories lack story interest. The long ones have too much of material at times, as they are interwoven with other stories and sub-stories. Clearly they seek to emphasise by tracing the series of lives of several individuals the principle of *Bhavāvali* i.e. the inexorable nature of the cycle of birth and death. It is also sought to stress the extreme importance of penance and of vow in Jaina religion. The story of Bhadrabāhu is one of the best in this collection. For in its mingled yarn we have historical truth blended with philosophy, narrative art with ethical import and humanism along with romanticism. The main theme of this story is the coming down to the south of sage Bhadrabāhu with king Samprati Candragupta, foreseeing the advent of famine in the north which would last for twelve years. The moment they set foot in Karnātaka in the pre-Christian era and started their penance in Śrāvaṇa Belgoḷa, the seed of Jaina religion was sown in Karnātaka and the foundation was laid for the edifice of Kannada literature. As a sub-story in this story, we have the story of Nandi-

mitra, who in his next birth became Samprati Candragupta. This sub-story is a fine example of the narrative art of *Vaḍḍārādhane.* In short, Nandimitra was born as an ill-fated child and suffered acutely as an orphan. But luckily for him later in life he met a Guru, who initiated him to Jaina faith and taught him the value of penance. Nandimitra practised severe penance and attained liberation. Thus the story illustrates through the Jaina technique and the principle of Indian philosophy that however unfortunate a person may be by birth, he can be the architect of his destiny by penance and perseverance. Śivakōṭi forgets himself in narrating the story. In some of his other stories, contrasted pairs of characters like Agnibhūti and Vāyubhūti in the story of Sukumāraswāmi as well as Vidyucchōra and Yamathanḍa in the story of Vidyucchōra have been portrayed very effectively. *Vaḍḍārādhane* occupies a unique place in Kannada literature more by its characteristic prose style than by its narrative skill. We know from *Kavirājamārga* about the existence of prose narratives in Kannada but they are yet untraced. After *Vaḍḍārādhane* in the whole range of Kannada literature up to the modern period there are just a few collections of stories in prose. Among those that are extant, *Vaḍḍārādhane* stands out by its individual style. Broadly speaking, it is written in old Kannada with an admixture of older and newer forms. In its diction, it shows a definite tendency to use pure Kannada words and phrases but has not abjured Sanskrit. In fact, it has made use of several Sanskrit and Prākrit words in common parlance as well as in scientific usage. On the whole, *Vaḍḍārādhane* is one of the priceless treasures of Kannada literature. Though it is a bunch of stories avowedly motivated by religious purpose and unction, it reveals the art of a born story-teller and an eminent prose stylist . It will continue to be remembered as a prose work of distinction of the early period.

CHAPTER III

OLD PERIOD—2

PAMPA

PAMPA is the first great poet known to us. Of the works, which have come down to us upto his time, Kavirājamārga is mainly a work on poetics in verse, whereas *Vaḍḍārādhane* is a religious story book in prose. It is in the works of Pampa that we come across full-fledged and mature works in campu form, which is an admixture of prose and verse in the classical tradition.

Pampa's statement about himself tell us that he was a unique poet, who has a combination of Vedic and Jaina cultures in him. He came of a well-known Vedic family but his father became a willing convert to Jainism. Pampa also became a devout follower of Jaina religion but he never lost his regard for Vedic culture. By dispassionate comprehension of the essence of the two cultures, he gained a ripe wisdom, which put him in tune with universal culture.

His poetry brought him enduring fame and with his sense of duty he blew up his master's enemies on the battle-field. Arikēsari of the Chalukya dynasty, the most eminent among the feudatory princes, was his patron and favourite hero. Pampa was the commander of his army. Though he was born in Vēngimanḍala in the South-East, he must have spent the most impressionable period of his life in beautiful Banavāsi and in the plains of Puligere. Recent discovery has shown that his mother came from Aṇṇigere which is situated near Puligere in North Karnatak. His love and admiration for Banavāsi was so intense that he exclaims in the words of Arjuna in his Bhārata. 'I shall remember Banavāsi even if one were to ask me at the point of the trident'. Pampa lived a rich and integrated life. Fortune showered her best on him. But he was not intoxicated by his riches. A king like Arikēsari patronised him but he never fawned on his masters. He had great faith in Jaina religion but he never became a fanatic. He had attained a kind of balance and poise, on account of which he could curb his aesthetic zeal with the rein of renunciation and spur his renunciation with the whip of aesthetic ardour.

Pampa wrote two works viz., *Ādipurāṇa* and *Vikramārjunavijaya* popularly known as *Pampabhārata*. On his own admission, *Ādipurāṇa* is religious whereas *Pampabhārata* is secular. There is reason to believe that Guṇavarma I of the 9th century was the first among

Kannada authors to write a religious work and a secular work in his *Harivamśa* and *Śūdraka* respectively. Extracts from these works are found in anthologies of classical poetry. Perhaps there was an earlier tradition of such writing. Any way, the first available complete works of this character are those of Pampa. He wrote *Ādipurāṇa* first in 941 A.D. and then *Pampa Bharata* probably in the same year. *Ādipurāṇa* is hagiological in nature, narrating the life of the first Jaina Tīrthankara, known as Ādinātha. It presents a vista of his previous lives as well. It also contains the life story of the first emperor in Jaina legend, viz., Bharatēśwara, the son of Ādinātha. *Pūrvapurāna* of Jinasēna in Sanskrit was the main source of *Ādipurāṇa.*

Pampa has followed this source closely in respect of the story and order of narration. And yet *Ādipurāṇa* has its own original stamp. Both of them are Jaina puranas and both of them are poetic in character. But in *Ādipurāṇa*, the poetic approach predominates over the mythological. *Pūrvapurāṇa* is a poem in verse, whereas *Ādipurāṇa* is a work in champu form. The former is over-elaborate, the latter is comparatively condensed. Pampa has amply justified his claim that one should look for religion and poetic charm together in his *Ādipurāṇa*. Occasionally the diction gets Sanskrit-ridden. But the poet has tried to blend religion and poetry in the manipulation of incidents and character portraiture.

Ādipurāṇa is not the story of a single birth of an individual. It encompasses in its wide scope the spiritual history of Ādinātha and other towering characters, stretching over a number of births. It depicts how they come out of the furnace of earthly life purified and in their last birth turned from enjoyment to renunciation and attained salvation by severe penance. The theme, even as it is, is highly complicated. In the hands of Pampa, it is less so and quite well-knit as an entire piece. In the story of the first ten births of Ādinātha, we do not have merely romantic or conventional narration. It is symbolic of the journey of a soul, aspiring to perfection and moving toward it from birth to birth. It is this quality of the poem which has an eternal appeal. We heartily appreciate this as well as the blending of religion and poetry in the beautiful portions of his work. It maybe pertinent to cite two or three illustrations. In the third birth of Ādinātha, he was born as Vajrajangha and he married Śrīmati, who was his wife in his previous birth bearing the name of Swayamprabhā. This couple enjoyed life to the utmost as if to make up for the discontent of the previous birth. They died when they were in each other's arms. One night as they lay oblivious of the whole world in their overpowering ecstasy, the smoke of the incense filled their chamber because the servants had forgotten to open the windows. Thus they were choked to death. Theirs was the death of ideal lovers, because, says Pampa, those lovers did not loosen their embrace despite the smoke of the incense that had enveloped them. They lived and died together. What could be more fortunate? Here is a vision of love which makes a festival of death. This shows how Pampa had

discerned the touch of the infinite in a tragic situation and could give it a significant turn and soften the severity of the tragedy.

Another example is the dance episode of Nīlānjane, which led to the renunciation of Ādinātha in his last birth. The story goes that Indra foresaw that the time for his renunciation and penance was approaching and arrived at his court to regale him with celestial music and dance. After enthralling music, came the dance of Nīlānjane, a heavenly damsel. As soon as she entered the stage, describes Pampa, she entered in an instant the hearts of all and looked as if the sharpened flower-arrow of Cupid had come to life. As the curtain slid aside, Cupid withdrew and scattered his flowery shafts when she scattered her handful of flowers on the stage. As she danced, the folds of her garment and the pearls of the garland in the parting of hair kept time with rhythmic beat. Every thing was novel in her dance patterns. As she retreated and advanced, she seemed to retreat into the hearts of the spectators and emerge from there. Her sweet smile seemed to sprinkle fresh nectar on all. When the hand of the drummer faltered at the height of the dance, she, the dancer, turned a drummer with her eyebrows playing the beating rod; Her side-long glance was a new moonlight advancing in all directions. The grace of her dancing brow was like the blooming of a host of blue lotuses. Her navel and armpit leaned forward to suck the nectar which Cupid had hidden in the eyes of gods and men, who watched the dance without a wink in the eye. The bards of heaven applauded her dance. Ādidēva was delighted with it. But lo! As the dance was in full swing, the sands of her life ran out. The delicate damsel vanished from the stage with the suddenness of lightning. At once Indra created a similar figure and put it on the stage for fear that the joyous experience would be interrupted. Gods and demons remained totally unaware of the change. But Ādidēva discerned it and was shocked by the ephemeral nature of the body. 'Oh! this beautiful body of a woman melted away all of a sudden. This life is so short and brittle. I shall spurn it straightaway'. With these words he made his resolve and said further 'This danceuse did not merely display her myriad dance drama but she showed me too well the drama of this life. Drink as one may from ever so many oceans in ever so many heavens, can this unquenchable thirst ever be quenched by sipping a little drop on the blade of grass, which is what human enjoyment means? Several kings became emperors but were caught in the whirl of unending birth and death as they forgot their identity and were immersed in sensual pleasures, straying away from true religion. I also did the same. I shall not do it any more'. And so he renounced the world and set his mind on liberation. There is a thrilling dramatic quality in the very situation as it appears in the original source. Pampa has exploited it fully and in doing so has summoned his imaginative powers as if they were a limitless source of rich imagery. He has bestowed on the picture the utmost vividness and fully revealed its significance. In both *Pūrvapurāṇa* and *Ādipurāṇa*, there is a blending of religious

purport and poetic beauty. But it is no exaggeration to say that their most intense union has been realised in *Ādipurāṇa* only.

Thirdly, we may consider the episode of Bharata and Bāhubali. Emperor Bharata, the eldest son of Ādideva, came back to his capital after his world-conquering campaign. The *cakra* (Discus), which always moved ahead of him indicating his sovereignty, suddenly stopped before the gates, because his younger brothers were not prepared to admit his supremacy and bow to him. Bāhubali, the bravest among them, challenged him to a duel. There was a fight. Bharata was vanquished and Bāhubali became the victor. Strangely enough, the victor instead of gloating over his achievement, grew humble. He reflected upon the fall of his mighty brother, which his greed for power and his egotism had brought about and grew weary of earthly pomp, pleasure and power. Bāhubali renounced the world and retired to the forest for penance. Bharata was visibly moved by his younger brother's unusual renunciation and followed him after ruling over the empire for some time. Pampa has depicted this episode powerfully with a true insight into the mind of both the characters—their humanity and their magnanimity.

Thus in several parts of the *Ādipurāṇa*, the demands of both religion and poetry are satisfied. Very often religion ceases to be sectarian and becomes universal. For instance, Pampa observes that religion which consists of compassion, restraint, charity, penance and character will uplift those who are drowned in the ocean of wordly life until they attain liberation. This is as true of Jainism as of any other religion. The close inter-relation of *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma* has been brought out by him through a significant imagery. *Artha* or wealth is the fruit of the tree of *Dharma* or righteousness and *Kāma* or enjoyment is the juice of that fruit. This means that wealth and enjoyment should be the natural outcome of true religion just as the fruit and its juice are the natural products of a tree. In another context, Pampa states categorically that people are said to belong to different *Varṇas* (castes) because of their different callings; otherwise humanity is truly one. This proclamation of a thousand years ago speaks volumes for the liberal vision of Pampa since it contains an eternal truth, which will inspire all generations including the modern. In this way, his *Ādipurāṇa* is singular in its outlook and tone although it is indebted to *Pūrvapurāṇa*. It has its share of insipid theory and pompous pedantry. But on the whole, it stands out as a classic like the lofty, towering image of Gommatēṣwara, standing erect though surrounded by coils of creepers and ant-hills.

Pampabhārata is the second great work of Pampa in campu form. He has given it the title *Vikramārjunavijaya* indicating clearly the central place, given to Arjuna in his story. And further, Arujna is no other than king Arikēsari himself, the great patron of Pampa. All the epithets used in this work to glorify Arjuna are meant to apply equally to Arikēsari. Though this identification appears laboured

at times, the double entendre intended in the poem is unique in conception and execution.

The *Mahābhārata* of Vyāsa is the main source of *Pampabhārata*. But Pampa did not merely hold the mirror up to the original. He gave it a shape and polish of his own like a jeweller treating a rough diamond fresh from the mine. The uniqueness of Pampa's genius lies in producing what he calls *Samastabhārata* i.e., a comprehensive and at the same time condensed version of *Bhārata* with undertones suggesting the contemporary political scene. The main episodes of the *Mahābhārata* retain their importance, but minor events and episodes are placed and presented with a rare and unerring sense of proportion. Sometimes a certain episode is condensed into one stanza but is nevertheless made alive and significant. The human conflict inherent in the story is depicted powerfully so as to appeal to the rational mind.

Pampa has deviated at times from the original while condensing and refashioning the story to suit the object of his *Samastabhārata*. One of the major changes he has made is the choice of Arjuna as the hero and his identification with Arikēsari, his patron. Consequently, his wife Subhadrā stepped into the limelight but the place of Draupadi became dubious. In the original story, she is the only wife of all the five Pandava brothers. In *Pampabhārata*, however, she is the wife of Arjuna alone. But Pampa's sense of propriety faltered in the course of the narration. When Draupadi was dragged to the court and insulted by Duśśasana, it was Bhīma who became all wrath and pledged himself to avenge the insult. However, after the war, in which the Pāndavas were victorious, the diadem of the chief queen graced the forehead of Subhadrā. The sufferings fell to the lot of Draupadi but the glory and joy were Subhadrā's. Again it was Bhīma who tied the hair of Draupadi into a braid after he fulfilled his vow, when all along Arjuna seemed but little provoked. This shows that Pampa got entangled and could not be consistent all along with some of the changes he had introduced. This apart, he has on the whole succeeded eminently in constructing a plot which depicts the tensions and the tussles between the Pandavas and the Kouravas and in portraying a whole gallery of varied characters and achieved what he set out to do in *Samastabhārata*. In this way he has offered the priceless gift of a great classic to Indian literature in general and to Kannada literature in particular.

Pampa's genius has played the philosopher's stone to the *Mahābhārata* story, turned it into gold and has developed it into an intensely picturesque composition. His power of compression and his sense of propriety are extraordinary. His compendium is not a dry summary of a long passage in the original. He creates live and graphic images even as he moves fast with succinct narration. For example, this is how he describes the love affair of Śantanu and Satyavati. 'While he was roaming about a-hunting, the fragrance of the doe-eyed damsel was wafted through the air, and drawn by her beauty like a bee, he

fell in love with her and held her hand like one grasping a red-hot iron barehanded to prove the sincerity of his passion and said to her: 'Come, let us go together'. To this, the abashed girl replied, 'Pray ask my father if you would'. Pampa has compressed into a single stanza here the intense longing of beauty-mad Śantanu, the suggestive manner of conveying it and to crown it, the clever reply of Satyavati, love-laden, shy and yet restrained and tactful. When we recall all the events of the main story of the *Mahābhāraṭa*, the reply of Satyavati beseeching Śantanu to seek her father's consent unfolds a world of significance. It contains the seed of the conflict between the Kauravas and the Pandavas; the test of the vow of Bhīṣma has its origin in it. As is well-known, the father of Satyavati gave his assent to the proposal on the condition that the child born of this union would be Śantanu's successor on the throne. This led to the magnanimous promise and vow of Bhīṣma and all the chain of happenings culminating in the hatred and the conflicts of the brothers and the blood-bath of Kurukṣētra. Thus Pampa's genius makes a small, innocent-looking sentence foreshadow with effortless ease the tragic course of events that followed this episode. Another instance of such compression is the incident of Pāṇḍurāja's death. Once when nature put on the loveliness of spring, Pāṇḍurāja, smitten by the curse of a sage, saw his wife Mādri bedecked with flowers and irresistably drawn towards her, clasped her in his arms as if he was hugging the goddess of death. Then, 'as the tight embrace loosened, the face dropped aside, the bright eyes slowly closed and breathing stopped, Mādri saw her husband dropping down as if unconscious and she screamed in horror, 'Has my sweet one fainted or grown fatigued?' Mādri was hoping against hope that her husband was not dead. Even here, we see before our eyes the vivid picture of extreme sorrow, caused by the tragedy of overpowering passion.

The poetic genius of Pampa scales new heights in depicting some of the crucial situations in the *Mahābhāraṭa* story. An excellent example of this is the episode of the game of dice. Pampa has presented this situation in minute detail with all the intensity of passion and the richness and variety of diction at his command. On the advice of Śakuni, Duryōdhana invites Yudhiṣthira to a pleasant holiday with him and provides numerous means of entertainment. One day they watch a game of dice, played by others. Then after a while Śakuni says 'What is the charm in just looking on? Why should you not play?' Thus is Yudhiṣthira drawn into the net without his realising it. This drama of deception proceeds according to plan until Yudhiṣthira loses his kingdom and Draupadi as stakes. At the behest of Duryōdhana, Duśśāsana drags Draupadi to the court and not heeding the advice of Bhīṣma and other elders tells her with utter contempt: 'Thou art a slave, go to thy drudgery as a slave' and pulls her braid of hair as if he is courting his own death. From this point onwards the genius of Pampa soars high. He has not only described vividly the characteristic reactions of all prominent persons present in the assembly,

according to their nature and outlook but has also depicted powerfully the very acme of righteous indignation in Draupadi and Bhīma. When Draupadi realises that her appeal is in vain and no one comes to her rescue, she points to her loosened braid of dishevelled hair and thunders: 'I shall keep my hair loose as they are now until such time as a hero comes forward to slay the wretched villain, who pulled my braid and to tie up with knot made of his entrails'. Bhīma, who has so long been wavering whether he should go against the truthfulness of his elder brother or not, cannot restrain himself when he hears the flaming words of Draupadi which act as a strong stimulus like incense to a ghost. He reacts immediately and says 'O Draupadi, one word of wrath from you is enough. Take it from me that with the smiting sweep of my mace, like a brand of devastating fire, I shall strike down wicked Duśśasana and tie your hair with his entrails as you desire. Not only this, I shall tear asunder his chest and quaff his blood. I shall break the thighs of red-eyed Duryōdhana and reduce to powder his crown studded with sparkling gems. Believe me Draupadi, sparks and live coals dart forth from my eyes as I see the enemies'. This terrible vow of Bhīma has found a most powerful expression in the words and tone of Pampa and defies all attempt at translation. Bhīma thunders like a storm cloud on Dooms-Day repeating his vow in the presence of Bhīṣma and other elders. The muse of Pampa matches it in power as if it were a hurricane propelling that cloud. Later, when Pāṇḍavas leave for the forest it turns into soft and sweet speech like a gale suddenly quelled, expressing the deep sympathy of the common people for the exiled Pāṇḍavas. The city folk who lined the streets as the Pandava brothers were leaving the capital exclaim 'what a rare person is Dharmarāja. How unsurpassed are Bhīma, Arjuna and their younger brothers, Nakula and Sahadeva. It is a pity that this calamity should befall them. Drunk with joy at his success in the game of dice, Duryōdhana saw only the land but not his duty, fool that he is. He did not see the club hanging unseen over him from behind but only saw the cup of milk before him'. This proverbial sentence, coming at the close of their very natural and human reaction, hints as never before at the impending war, bringing total ruin and disaster to Duryōdhana. The sublime genius of Pampa has manifested itself with as much power in the delineation of character as in the handling of situations. He has shown deep understanding of all the characters that figure on the Mahābhārata stage and portrayed them with true insight as appropriate to every situation. Though he has declared at the end of this poem that he has treated Duryōdhana as an embodiment of obduracy, Karṇa of truthfulness, Bhīma of valour etc., he suggests that they are not just cast in the mould of one quality or the other but they are living human beings with complex personalities. In the episode in which Duryōdhana decides to honour Bhīṣma with the command of the Kaurava army, the difference in the characters of Bhīṣhma and Karṇa is striking. Karṇa speaks very slightingly of Bhīṣma as totally unfit to be an army chief on accoun

of old age, when Droṇa chides him with the remark 'That you speak with such a bad tongue about an elderly person like Bhīṣma shows your mean birth and low *Kula!*' Karṇa at once flares up. 'You have long been bragging of Kula all the while. What is this business of *kula?* I have the strength to swallow up anyone who assails me. *Kula* is not *kula*, it is '*cala*' (stubbornness), which is real *kula*. Merit, self-respect and valour, that is *kula*. In this strife your idea of kula will bring you to grief and ruin'. To all this, Bhīṣma replies with characteristic dignity and restraint: 'O Karṇa, do I have in me the overflowing valour, the intoxication of youth, the confidence of the king and the might of arm as you have? This is the Bhāraṭa war, in which we have to face Arjuna in battle. Why do you talk like one touched to the quick? On this great battlefield, you will have your turn too'. In the last sentence of Bhīṣma, the sarcastic suggestion is as subtle and sharp as it is mild. The suggestion is, you will get your turn to be commander as I have got it now. But it is only to fight and be finished and not to conquer'. The poet implies that Bhīṣma had foreseen with his far-sighted wisdom that the Pāṇḍavas would ultimately win the war. In the later phases of the story, the rashness and the vanity of Karṇa make room for humility and self-sacrifice. The noble personality of a truthful, charitable, loyal and dutiful Karṇa comes to the fore. When he becomes the commander of the Kaurava army, before going to battle he goes to Bhīṣma who is lying on a bed of arrows and touching his feet with his forehead, craves his forgiveness.

Bhīṣma is deeply touched by Karṇa's penitence and speaks to him calmly in his own dignified way without any of the bitterness of the past. This situation is a test of Pampa's insight into character. Here we see that his characters grow with circumstance and stand out as living human beings. It is clear from the latter part of this classic that he had great love and admiration for Karṇa. He gives so much prominence to Karṇa after he becomes the army chief till his death that he occupies the centre of the stage as if he is the hero of the poem. He praises him to the skies particularly when he falls to the arrow of Arjuna. The last stanza in which he extols him is the highest tribute that a poet can pay to a hero. Addressing the reader the poet says 'Oh brother, remember not any one else in the Bhārata. If you wish to remember any one person with one mind remember Karṇa. Who can equal Karṇa in greatness, truthfulness, valour and self-denial? The Bhārata story becomes sweet as nectar to the ear (Karṇarasāyana) with the people's talk about Karṇa'. Another remarkable achievement of *Pampabhārata* is the character of Duryōdhana. The Duryōdhana of *Vyāsabhārata* was a great warrior who was greedy and wicked as well as self-respecting and staunch. Sanskrit poets and poets in other Indian languages have etched his character inspired by the original, each in his own way. Though Pampa has generally followed the outline as he found it in the epic, he has shed a new light in the latter part of the Bhārata Story and removed some of the contradictions in

the original. Duryōdhana is not as some people think a high-souled person but an ambitious hero with strong prejudices ingrained in him. It is characteristic of Pampa that he raises the tone of his character by emphasising the noble aspects of his personality which conceal his greed and hatred. The greedy and jealous Duryōdhana of the former phase changes into a hero of many lovable qualities, almost making us forget his earlier phase. After the death of Karṇa, Duryōdhana laments his death in these words. 'Both of us were one soul, though two in body. I loved you for my work and it was I who killed you'. He does not lose heart and does not agree to make peace with the Pāndavas though his parents beg him to do so. He says to them: 'Not that I cannot live in peace with the innocent Pāndavas. But the enemy must be resisted. I have no love for this earth which swallowed the chariot of Karṇa'. He faces all odds and ill-omens on the battlefield and braves it all like a hero. In the duel with Bhīma after his rise from Vaiśampāyana lake, he falls to the ground with his thighs broken and crown shattered. He dies a hero's death. Whatever he said, he stuck to till the end, whatever he willed to do he did not flinch from, whatever he swore by, he carried out till his body fell to the ground. What a proud hero is Duryōdhana? This is the encomium, showered on him by Pampa.

Pampabhārata is one of the great classics of Kannada poetry. We may examine it in any aspect and we shall discover new meanings and new sources of delight. Its richness of imagery, felicity and propriety of diction, sound-effects, variety of metre and mastery of current idiom and proverb—whatever aspect we take up for study a sense of marvel dawns on us which is the ultimate effect of great poetry. As Pampa himself has said, poetry should be always as new and as solemn as the sea. It should contain the very essence of life and spread the message of true religion and culture. Like *Ādipurāṇa*, *Pampabhārata* has these qualities of great poetry; it is even more mature and greater in the quality of its art. Though it is ostensibly secular, it is religious or cultural in the true sense of the term. For instance, in the four stanzas in which Pampa describes the beauty of Banavāsi, he defines an ideal man as one, who has the quality of *Tyāga* and *Bhōga* (self-denial and enjoyment), learning and culture, love of music and sociability. This was the synthesis, which Pampa had observed in the culture of Karnatak and which he had tried to assimilate in his own personality.

Chapter IV

OLD PERIOD—2

PONNA-RANNA

Ponna and Ranna were two poets of the 10th century, who were more or less contemporaries of Pampa. According to Ranna, these three formed a trio called *Raṭnaṭraya* because they illumined Jaina thought through their *purāṇas*. Like Pampa and Ranna, Ponna seems to have followed the earlier tradition of writing one secular and another religious work in *Rāmakathe* or *Bhuvanaikarāmābhyudaya* and *Śāntipurāṇa* respectively. His *Rāmakathe* is not available, though stray stanzas from it appear in quotation.

Śāntipurāṇa is his only work, which has come down to us. It is the biography of Śāntināthatīrthankara in the Jainapurāṇa style. Most of this work is preoccupied with an elaborate and intricate account of the eleven previous births of Śāntinātha. Almost everywhere the poet has used his source material for high-flown description and sectarian elucidation. There is not a single captivating situation or impressive character, such as we have in *Ādipurāṇa*. Be it, however, said to his credit that even through the thick cloud of convention, a bright image or a happy phrase shines forth here and there and reveals his real genius. It will not be fair to judge him until we are in possession of his other work, where he might have had greater opportunities of unshackled expression.

Ranna has earned fame as a great poet who lighted up Kannada poetry by his singular lustre. Born in a Jaina family of banglemakers in north Karnāṭak, he travelled to Jaina centres of learning in the south and mastered grammar and the classics of the day. He came back to the land of his birth and became the court-poet of Satyāśraya, the Chalukyan emperor. In his personality, we see the self-confidence of a valiant poet who fought against odds and carved his destiny by his own effort. He is never shy in praising himself and his works. There is no limit to his zeal, no restraint on his inspiration. He hates hypocrisy and circumlocution in life and literature. There is a terrific power and directness in his poetic expression. He wrote *Ajitapurāṇa* and *Gadāyuddha*—one religious and another secular, following in the foot-steps of Pampa but refusing to be his mere shadow. *Ajiṭapurāṇa* is the story of Ajitanātha, the second Tīrthankara, which he wrote at the instance of Attimabbe, who was one of the most charitable women of the day and won the title of *Dānacintāmaṇi*. *Ajitapurāṇa* is

characterised by the absence of the *Bhavāvali*[1] tangle. Only one previous birth of Ajitaswāmi has come in for treatment. Ranna concentrates all his attention on the life of Ajitaswāmi from his entry into womb upto his salvation, detailing the five Kalyāṇas i.e., phases in his life according to Jaina tradition. There is not much of a story interest or human touch in the narration. Everything is extraordinary and marvellous. But in the story of emperor Sagara, we do have a graphic picture of human valour and human sorrow at separation. One can see in it the zeal and the power of Ranna's genius, the height of fancy and the mastery of diction, showing promise of greater achievement. *Gadāyuddha* or *Sāhasabhīmavijaya* as he calls it is Ranna's masterpiece, his *Kritiratna*. The concluding portion of the *Mahābhārata* is the theme of this work in campu form. *Pampabhārata* in general and the 13th Āśwāsa in particular inspired Ranna and influenced his work. He might have read and reread *Pampabhārata* with a high sense of appreciation and made it his own. That is why he has reproduced some of its ideas and phrases *ad verbum* and on some he has shed the light of his own imagination. He has taken the cue from Sanskrit plays like Bhāsa's *Ūrubhanga* and *Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa's Venisamhāra* and produced a rare work of art, which delights both the ear and the eye as it combines both poetic and dramatic elements. It is an undisputed fact that even after imbibing several influences, Ranna has given to Kannada poetry a work which in a sense is a reshaping of an old story but is yet original and brilliant. Just as Pampa named Arikēsari as the hero of his Bhārata and identified him with Arjuna, Ranna raised his patron Satyaśraya to the status of the hero of his poem and identified him with Bhīma. Pampa's work was called *Vikramārjunavijaya*, whereas Ranna's work was called *Sāhasabhīmavijaya*. Pampa put Arjuna on the throne at the end, Ranna enthroned Bhīma. In his excessive loyalty to his king, Ranna has attributed the genealogy of his patron to Bhīma as Pampa did to Arjuna and has thus spoiled the charm of the identification. On the whole, it may be said that Ranna has exhibited a greater sense of propriety in this kind of manipulation. For, Bhīma who fulfilled his pledge to Draupadi, rightly deserves the honour of wearing the kingly crown and tying Draupadi's hair into a braid. *Gadāyuddha* is not a work of epic magnitude like *Pampabhārata* but it has attained poetic greatness in modest length. As suggested earlier, *Gadāyuddha* has in the greater part assumed the character of a drama though it is a poem to be read. Therein lies its excellence. The entire poem can be divided into eight or ten scenes, showing in every situation and dialogue how Ranna was a born dramatist. For instance, in the first scene, there is fury of increasing tempo in the fiery words of vow uttered by Bhīma when he is provoked by Draupadi. Besides, there is a dramatic directness of appeal in the dialogue of this situation.[2]

[1] *Bhavāvali* means 'a series of births'.

[2] Ranna: *Gadāyuddha*, 1/55-70.

Bhīma has killed Duśśāsana and quaffed his blood. But his vow remains unfulfilled in respect of Duryōdhana. So he appears as fierce as the god of Death at the time of the deluge.

Draupadi is even now apprehensive that there may be peace with Duryōdhana. Well, 'if there be peace, you may return to the forest. As for me, I shall have recourse to fire as I have come out of fire'. To these biting words of Draupadi, Bhīma reacts strongly like Retribution incarnate, 'if you are the daughter of fire, I am the son of wind. If we join, can there be peace at all? Wind and fire—can these two together not burn up the foe? Draupadi, this your hair blackened by the smoke of the fire of insult is not a mere dark mass; it is the weird hand of death, thrust forth to suck the life of the Kuru family. I killed all Kaurava brothers, drank the blood of the brother of this wretched Kaurava. I have fulfilled two of my vows. Will I sit quiet without fulfilling the remaining two? I shall break the thighs of Duryōdhana, smash his crown and then do your hair'. In these words we do not have just imaginative puissance but the evidence of a dramatic vigour, capable of producing extraordinary effect when visualised and acted.

Further, when Duryōdhana is opening his heart to Sanjaya on the battle-field, his parents wend their way in search of him. Duryōdhana swoons, not being prepared to show his face to them. They lament that even he, the last scion of the family, has breathed his last. When, however, he regains consciousness, they beg of him to make peace with the Pāndavas. In the simple, unassuming manner of a mother, Gāndhāri says, 'Give up this business of war and come home; my son. The dead sons are dead and gone, you are enough for us. Can we bring back those who passed away?' Duryōdhana cannot even bear to listen to such a proposal. He emits sparks of revenge. 'I shall vanquish Arjuna and pull out Karṇa and Duśśāsana from Bhīma's belly. May be they are guilt-less but I can never live in peace with Dharmarāja'. Here we have words which acquire full significance only when acted on the stage. As soon as Duryōdhana utters the name of Arjuna and mumbles the name of Bhīma, he is suddenly reminded of his beloved friend, Karṇa and his fond brother, Duśśāsana, whom Arjuna and Bhīma sent to untimely grave and he resolves to avenge their cruel death. This kind of dramatic suddenness has imparted a flavour all its own to Ranna's poetry.

Duryōdhana lies hidden in the Vaiśampāyana lake on the advice of Bhīṣma. Not being able to find him anywhere after a frantic search, Bhīma is furious. Biting his moustache, he roars: 'What shall I do to track him down? Shall I force the gods to vomit the nectar that they have drunk? Did he go to the nether world or to the ends of the earth or did he enter again the womb of his mother? I shall trace and hack him even if he is under the protective arms of the gods'. Bhīma then proceeds to the enemies' camp and meets Dhritarāṣṭra and Gāndhāri. He boastfully tells them, 'I have killed your hundred

sons and I have now come to swallow up Duryōdhana'. At this, Gāndhāri makes a pathetic appeal to him: 'Even the anguish caused by the death of a hundred sons has not put out our lives. Do one good turn to us, Bhīma. Swallow us up first and then swallow our son'. How simple and how heart-rending is this appeal, coming from a mother's heart! In Gāndhāri, Ranna has embodied all motherhood. At long last, Duryōdhana is traced in the lake. The words of the other Pandavas are of no avail in rousing him from hiding. Then Bhīma sees that he will come out only after hearing his voice. He pours forth a lava of insulting and provocative words. It has an immediate effect. 'When Duryōdhana heard the voice, which surpassed the roar of the lion and the thunder of the clouds, his eyes reddened with anger. and he perspired though he was submerged in water!' The genius of Ranna has found its fulfilment by hitting upon the right image to express fury. Can any one perspire while under water? No, never, but when the fire of fury, capable of consuming that water, blazes forth, even the impossible happens. Duryōdhana can no longer remain in water. He comes out like fire on Dooms-Day, rising from the nether world and asks 'Where is Bhīma?'. Looking all around, he brandishes his mace as his red eyes burn like the third eye of god Śiva. In this way, the sentiment of Roudra mingles with that of Vīra and soars to new heights in what follows. In heroic dialogue and retort and in the duel between the two heroes—in all this, the genius of Ranna has carried the music of the dreadful to the highest pitch. The character of Duryōdhana attracts us in the greater part of *Gadāyuddha* as it does in the concluding part of *Pampabhārata*. His unflinching fortitude, brotherly love, ideal friendship, singlehanded valour—these qualities of his command our respect. Seeing the dead body of Abhimanyu, the son of his enemy, he pays his sincere tribute to him. He exclaims 'Let me die like you after showing my prowess in battle'. He even bows to him though he is a young boy. When he lies on the ground with his thigh broken and when his death is near, Aswaṭṭhāma rashly kills the children of the Pāṇḍavas and placing their heads before him, says 'Look, here are the heads of the Pāṇḍavas'. The 'high-souled' Duryōdhana gazes over them and observes in deep sorrow 'This is not the head of Bhīma. Had it been his, could it have looked at me in so unaffected a manner? It is all in vain. You have lost all sense. These are not the heads of the Pāṇḍavas. You have thoughtlessly done to death the children of the Pāṇḍavas'. The reason given by Ranna for saying that it was not the head of Bhīma is an excellent instance of his great genius. The term 'high-souled' (Mahānubhāva) used by Ranna in respect of Duryōdhana in this context is to a certain extent an exaggeration. If we do not take into account the subtle implication of all his words that follow, we may be confirmed in our opinion that he was a very noble person. In our view, Duryōdhana of the *Mahābhārata* was not just a wicked man. He was a complex character. He was as much a self-respecting hero as he was greedy and hateful. This conception of Duryōdhana reached its apex in *Pampabhārata*

and declined a little in *Gadāyuddha*. Though Ranna has generally stressed the lofty nature of Duryōdhana, it may be seen that he has prevented an overdoing of that loftiness by humanising him in the proper context. Therein lies his singular contribution to the portrayal of this character.

Other Poets

Among the other writers of the tenth century, Cāvuṇḍarāya deserves mention as a prose stylist. Like Pampa, he was both a poet and a warrior. As the commander of the army of king Rācamalla, he won many battles and installed the colossal image of Gommatēśwara in Śravaṇabeḷogoḷa. The theme of his work, entitled *Cāvundarāya purāṇa* is the life and legend of 63 Śalākapuruṣas of Jaina tradition. It was his intention to epitomise in Kannada the well-known Mahapurāṇa written in Sanskrit. Mostly he is interested in the salient features of Jaina tradition and religion. His general outlook is that of an accurate recorder of tradition and not of a creative artist. He chooses the most essential features of his theme and describes them with the precision of a scientific writer. His work has acquired importance mainly for its unique prose style—a style which combines the narrative and the scientific manner of writing which flourished independently of each other for centuries. In this work, the natural flow of narrative prose and the flexibility of the language of everyday life have been blended with the precision and concreteness of scientific prose. Thus Cāvuṇḍarāya has won a place in the literary world more as a prose stylist than as a narrative artist.

Nāgavarma I lived towards the close of the tenth century. His date and works have been the subject of controversy. It is here assumed that he was the author of two works viz., *Chhandōmbudhi* and *Karnāṭaka Kādambari*. *Chhandōmbudhi* is the first available work on prosody in Kannada, that has defined in clear terms what may be called Kannada Prosody and explained the metrical forms peculiar to Kannada poetry alongside of Sanskrit metres. His *Karnāṭaka kādambari* is a rendering into Kannada of the well-known *Kādambari* of Bāna in Sanskrit. Bāna's *Kadambari*, which is the very acme of lofty grandeur in Sanskrit, is a challenge to any translator. Nāgavarma took up the challenge and achieved considerable success in his task by converting it into a classical composition in the *campu* form. He took care to see that on the one hand the adaptation did not carry his work far from the original and that on the other hand, it did not become artificial by being too close to it. He thus struck a middle path and achieved a model translation. He has taken particular care to retain the essence of the original story, the sense of character, the charm of description and the beauty of imagery, peculiar to Bāna. By assimilating the original and making it his own, he produced a work which reads like an effortless original composition. What would have been a mere translation has thus come to be a 'transcreation'—an original composition with its own form and flavour. Of course, in this endeavour, he has omitted some portions,

condensed some others and expanded a few others. Like an ideal translator, he has introduced poetic ideas, which are finer than in the original. The omission of descriptive passages found in the original is generally dictated by a sense of appropriateness. His language is simple and clear and sweet to the ear; it flows on like a limpid and solemn stream. It is free from excessive importation of Sanskrit words from the original; nor has his own Sanskritism rendered the style obscure and clumsy. The romantic theme and plot of Bāna's *Kādambari* become dear and near to us. It may be confidently said that no translation in old Kannada has equalled this work.

As we move to the eleventh century, we begin to feel that in poetry, the age of the Titans is over. In the tenth century, Kannada was fortunate in two such mighty poets as Pampa and Ranna. In life as well as in literature, a certain extraordinary vitality manifested itself. The poets, no doubt, were a few but in the *campu* poems, they gave poetry of a high quality. In the eleventh century, however, the number of poets was small and their writings were generally of poor quality barring, of course, a few exceptions. But a new happy tendency was manifest. Whatever the theme religious or secular, the poets wrote in high-flown *campu* form. In this century, however, the stories came close to the life of the common man. The prose story had already appeared in works like *Vaḍḍarādhane.* But they smacked more of the old world and had less of narrative flavour. Durgasimha and Nayasēna stood out as signposts of the new trend. Durgasimha was an army chief in the court of the Cālukyan king, called Jagadēkamalla in the first half of the eleventh century and belonged to the class of poet-warriors like Pampa. The only work, which he has written, is a rendering of Sanskrit *Pancatantra*, which is well-known as a collection of fables. But his version has a distinction. He has said in his preface that his *Pancatantra* in Kannada was different from others, based as it was on the *Pancatantra* of Vasubhāgabhaṭṭa, which owed its origin to the five stories written by Guṇāḍhya in Paiśācaka language. He has not made any mention of the *Pancatantra* of *Viṣṇuśarma*, which is generally known in the world of Sanskrit. We owe our very knowledge of the existence of the Vasubhāgabhatta version to the *Pancatantra* of Durgasimha. It has thus gained a special importance in the whole range of Indian literature. The researches of scholars brought to light the *Tantrōpākhyāna* in Sanskrit and Javanese versions of Vasubhāgabhatta's narrative tradition. Scholars are still engaged in a comparative study of all these versions. In the meanwhile, it may be broadly surmised that the stories which are not found in Viṣṇuśarma's *Pancatantra* but are found in Durgasimha, have been culled from Vasubhāga's version. Secondly, Durgasimha used Jaina doctrines and terms not found in Viṣṇuśarma, though he himself was a follower of Vedic religion. This shows that the original *Pancatantra* of Vasubhāga had Jaina predilections. Durgasimha avers that he has composed his work in a novel way. We cannot examine his claim until we are in possession of Vasubhāga's authentic

version. For the present we may safely conclude that he has generally retained the story and the temper of the original and amplified it occasionally in his narration and description. Besides, in his use of campu form, prose preponderates over verse. It differs from the *campu* pattern of Pampa and others in subject-matter and style. Probably his innovation lies in this difference. Just as Nāgavarma showed his originality by his adaptation of Bāna's *Kādambari*, Durgasimha might have displayed his originality in his rendering of Panchaṭanṭra. It is noteworthy that each has bent the campu form to his purpose, while trying to render Sanskrit works which are entirely prose or predominantly prose. But in their achievement in adaptation they are not in the same class. Though Durgasimha did have the learning and the genius for a good adaptation, he did not have the poetic gift and the maturity of style of Nāgavarma I. In his narration as well as his diction, he combines the traits of *campu* with those of the *gadyakathā* i.e., prose narration. He shows definite leanings towards pure Kannada idiom and has mastered it. While the attempt to combine the classical and the popular styles may deserve praise as a striking experiment, it must be admitted that he has not achieved a synthesis. If Nāgavarma I, gave Kannada a free and fascinating rendering of Bāna's *Kādambari*, a well-known Sanskrit classic, Durgasimha rendered into Kannada a popular collection of tales in Sanskrit. Durgasimha occupies a middle position of honour among translators of Sanskrit works.

Nāgacandra was one of the illustrious poets, who lived towards the close of the 11th century A.D. We know but little about his life. He seems to have been honoured by the kings of Hoysala and Chalukya dynasties but we do not know specifically who his royal patron was. He has said that he built a temple for Mallijina at Vijayapura i.e., modern Bijapur and wrote a work on that Tīrthankara. He was a very devout Jaina. His works reveal his religious fervour and his reverence for Jina and Guru. He was also one of the great exponents of Śāntarasa as a sentiment in poetry. He wrote two books viz., *Mallināthapurāṇa* and *Rāmacandra Caritapurāṇa*. In the former, probably his first work, he narrates the story of Mallinātha, the 19th Tīrthankara in the tradition of Jainapurāṇas, for which Pampa had blazed the trail in his *Ādipurāṇa*. Though the story of this purāṇa is thin, it has spread over 14 cantos comprising numerous stanzas. A king called Vaiśravaṇa, at the zenith of the pleasures of earthly life, saw a big banyan tree crash, struck by lightning. It shocked him into a realisation of the vanity of life and he retired to the forest for penance and became Ahamindra in heaven. In his next birth, he was born as Mallinātha, renounced the world at a very young age and attained the stature of Tīrthankara by the power of his penance. In his Purāṇa, Nāgachandra covers the thin bower of story with creeper-like descriptions and with a variegated portrayal of bhōga and *tyāga*. There is, of course, architectonic skill but there is hardly any situation which moves us deeply. The one or two situations, to which we are drawn,

turn out to be just pretexts for elaborate description or philosophic cogitation. For instance, when Vaiśravana beholds the sudden fall of a banyan tree, he begins to wonder whether one could depend on this body which may meet the fate of that tree at any time and his thoughts turn towards renunciation. Thought follows thought, all centred on the futility of earthly life. With such thoughts, the king goes to bed in perfect peace and when he wakes up next morning and looks at the sky, the sky seems as pure and sacred as a hermitage. Here is no mere idle fancy. It is a significant image, suggesting the king's keenness to retire to the forest for penance with a purified heart. When he announces his resolve, there is lamentation in the harem. The queens cry their heart out and roll on the ground. But this grief does not shake his decision. Like the sun who dries up the dew on the lotus with the soft morning ray, he wipes the tear from his son's eye and says: 'One should grieve over the loss of virtue; should one grieve on the gain of virtue?' Lengthy poems, which have but a thin story element and have considerable padding of description are numerous in Kannada. They achieve poetic excellence occasionally, in the midst of the flight of mere fancy and the display of grandiose diction. Mallināthapurāṇa undoubtedly is not of this category; it is deeper in significance and displays better construction. All the same, it has no situations vibrating with life and not much of character portrayal. As such, it cannot be rated high as a poem, though here and there it scales considerable heights of poetry.

Rāmacandracaritapurāṇa or *Pamparāmāyaṇa* as it is popularly called is Nāgacandra's second and more mature work. It has been guessed that already there was a Rāmāyaṇa in Kannada before *Kavirājamārga*, since it contains a few excerpts from it. The *Rāmakathe* of Ponna has not yet been traced. *Pamparāmāyaṇa* is, therefore, the first extant *Rāmāyaṇa*, which is fairly extensive. But it does not owe its inspiration to Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*. It is indebted to *Pauma caria* of Vimalasūri, which presents the Jaina version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Nagacandra has followed this Prākrit original very closely and yet he says that his narration is unique (*Apūrva*). If one were to compare it with *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa*, his statement can be accepted. But the word '*Apūrva*' loses some of its force if Nagacandra's work were to be compared with *Pauma caria*. Only when we study the work minutely, we find a few innovations in point of detail. Its total impact is different because of the degree of elaboration in plot and characterisation. Though in relation to the original, *Pamparāmāyaṇa* is an abridgement, by itself it is an extensive work in *campu* form having 16 *Āsvāsas*. The poet has elaborated the theme in the manner of a classical poet with a view to satisfying his religious and poetic urges.

All the characters of *Pamparāmāyaṇa* are moulded after Vimalasūri in their strength and their weakness. According to Vimalasūri, Rāma had reached the very last birth in the cycle of spiritual evolution and could not, therefore, resort to violence. Lakṣmaṇa could do it. It is, therefore, he who kills Rāvaṇa and for this act he is condemned to hell

for some time and later attains salvation. Nāgacandra makes no attempt to eliminate the inconsistencies, resulting from his faithful adherence to the original. His Rāma acts in a manner, which is unbecoming of a Kṣatriya hero. And yet he occupies the centre of the stage. It is Lakṣmaṇa, who displays admirable prowess in many battles and achieves victory and marries several lovely maidens. But he does not get as much importance as Rāma. The character of Sīta is, however, uniformly appealing. She is steadfast in her love and devotion to her husband like Vālmīki's Sīta. But her chastity pales into ineffectual idealism when both Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa show no qualms about polygamy. In Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, the mutual love and single-minded devotion of Rāma and Sīta are a source of inspiration in conjugal life. It disappears here. It is strange that Mandōdari, the wife of Rāvaṇa, tries to persuade Sīta to accept the love of Rāvaṇa. Thus she tarnishes her own character. It is the character of Rāvaṇa in *Pamparāmāyaṇa*, that lives fresh in our memory. The Rāvaṇa of Vimalasūri is different from the Rāvaṇa of Vālmīki. Vimalasūri's Rāvaṇa is a high-souled person and a man of virtue. But in an evil hour he falls a prey to his passion for Sīta. He carries her away to Lankā and labours hard to win her love. But when he realises how steadfast is her devotion to Rāma, he repents his action and retraces his steps. Nāgacandra has made this conception of the character his own and realises it in the poem magnificently. We may cite a few examples of his art of delineation. Rāvaṇa approached the impregnable fort of Nalakūbara in his triumphant march for world-conquest. When he is considering how best to capture the fortress, Uparambhā, wife of Nalakūbara, who has long been enamoured of him, sent her emissary to Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa summons her and pretends to love her only with a view to mastering the technique of capturing the fort. Then he says to her 'you have been my preceptor because you have taught me the technique. Have no other thought but be happy with your husband in conjugal love'. Later, Rāvaṇa takes the vow of 'parānganā virati' (desistance from other women) and is revered far and wide as a man of virtue and nobility. It is against this background that we must view the episode of the abduction of Sīta. On hearing that his sister's son was killed by Lakṣmaṇa, Rāvaṇa was volcanic in fury and decided to have revenge on him. As he sped in his Puṣpaka-Vimāna, the flag of his 'Vimāna' fluttering backward in the wind blowing from the opposite direction seemed to motion to him to go back; the tinkling of the bells seemed to proclaim the impropriety of his act, and pearl-like drops trickling from the clouds looked like tears of his *Puṇyadēvata* (the goddess of his good deeds). When he saw Sīta beside Rāma, she appeared like a snare to his sight and a diamond shackle to his heart. His mind wavered. Cupid discharged his row of arrows on long-sought Rāvaṇa, asking him mockingly what had happened to that mind, which till then the loveliness of several earthly and even celestial damsels could not move. Like sparks reduced to cinders, all his virtues faded. It was due to the evil moment. Even the sea transgresses its limit at some time or

the other. Rāvaṇa summoned his *avalokini vidyā*, which was his conscience and divine agent to ask how Sīta could be separated from Rāma. The Vidyā trembled and cautioned him against that temptation. But Rāvaṇa refused to listen. He hastened to her presence when she was alone and carried her away by force. Nāgacandra makes this pathetic situation deeply moving. And further, the supreme efforts of Rāvaṇa to entice Sīta have stirred the powerful imagination of the poet. In one of the most eloquent passages in the context, Rāvaṇa tempts Sīta with the picture of his pomp thus: 'On a couch made of the tusk of Indra's elephants, which was broken in a fight with me, you will lie on the soft fur of the swan of Brahma, which was killed by the guardian angels of the quarters and used to serve as cover for their own backs. You will lie there until you wake up to hear the morning song, sung by heavenly singers'. This stanza is ample testimony to the great power of Nāgacandra to realize in a vivid image an abstract idea—the idea of luxury.

Sīta did not succumb even to this most dazzling temptation. Rāvaṇa then assumed a weird form and tried to frighten her. But she remained adamant, with the hallowed name of Jina on her lips, like the brightness of a gem, which does not flicker in the wind. Rāvaṇa was deeply impressed by her unalterable love for Rāma, overcame his weakness for her just as turbid water loses its impurity and becomes perfectly pure and limpid. In this way Nāgacandra, inspired by Vimalasūri, has recreated the character and personality of Rāvaṇa. As in the works of Pampa and Ranna, Duryōdhana has shone as a noble hero despite the complexity of his mental make-up, so in this work of Nāgacandra, Rāvaṇa has come out as sinless though a sinner and manifested his penitent goodness.

Nāgacandra has called himself *Abhinavapampa*. His work is known as *Pamparāmāyaṇa*. If his title means that he was another Pampa, a poet as great as he, it may be regarded as self-praise. But there are more points of dissimilarity than of similarity between them. Pampa wrote two different types of composition, one the religious and the other secular. The *Bhārata* of Pampa is secular, whereas the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Nāgacandra is religious, being a Jaina version. They differ considerably in the treatment of the theme and style. Pampa's style is characterised by compactness and a certain amount of obscurity while Nāgacandra's style is clear and limpid. Nāgacandra did have the poetic genius of Pampa and he knew the art of compression. But both his works did not equal any work of Pampa, probably because of their preoccupation with sectarian religion and ethics. They occasionally offer passages of great poetry but the total work fails to afford the experience of great poetry.

The poetess Kanti is mentioned as a contemporary of Nāgacandra. Nāgacandra himself does not refer to her. References to her are later than the 16th century. Some verses known as riddles of Kanti and Hampa are extant. Though it is not easy to dismiss all about her as myth, it is doubtful if the verses attributed to her are genuine.

One can only say that she will rank as the first poetess in Kannada if her identity is established by further research.

Nayasena

Nayasena was an ascetic poet of the early part of the 12th century. He wrote *Dharmāmṛta*, a collection of 14 stories, emphasising the significance of the 14 vows of Jaina religion. Though the form of this work is *campu*, the style is more popular than classical. Considering his skill as a story teller in the popular vein, his sense of satire and abundant use of popular idiom and adage, his work can be truly described as a Jaina purāṇa, meant for the common man. Of course, he shows sectarian zeal in his narration and overdoes the use of popular diction. He is one of the earliest story tellers and satirists, with a prediliction towards the popular manner of writing in a classical age. In fact, he was the first poet to voice his protest against the excessive use of Sanskrit in Kannada poetry. He held aloft the banner of pure Kannada in his own work though he was also not altogether free from blame in employing Sanskrit words and phrases in his verse. One of the striking features of his narrative art is the exuberance in the use of similes mostly in his prose passages. There is a kind of propriety, a certain flavour, a sense of humour and a closeness to the life of the people in this kind of writing. But as has been pointed out, he does not exhibit a sense of proportion. The excessive use of similes impedes the narration and makes the style verbose. Another writer called Brahmaśiva lived in the middle of the 12th century A.D. and wrote a work in verse called *Samayaparīkṣa*. It is avowedly a combative book which aims at denouncing and ridiculing other faiths like Śaivism and establishing the supremacy of Jainism. There is no story or plot, no character study or description of any kind in it. It is rational in its approach and satirical in its tone. Its satire is often biting, intolerant of other faiths and beliefs. But it is a rare record of the manners, customs and superstitions of the day. Thus it is a handbook of immense value to students of social and religious life of mediaeval Karnātaka.

Nāgavarma II, who lived in the middle of the 12th century, was a scholar of repute and a poet of merit. He pressed into service his encyclopaedic knowledge and produced scientific works on grammar, poetics, prosody and lexicon, all that a student of Kannada might need whether he is a poet or a critic. Nāgavarma was not just a pedantic scholar but a man of erudition with a progressive outlook. He was hailed as one of the best critics of the day.

We have in the course of this survey dealt with literature in Kannada from 500 to 1200 A.D. with special reference to a few significant writers of importance and their contribution to literature. This period is known as the golden age of Kannada poetry, the age of the classical epic. *Campu* was the most favourite form of composition in this age. It reached its high watermark in some of the secular and religious works, written by eminent poets. The secular works achieved

a fine blending of contemporary history and epic theme. This manner of writing, different from the direct treatment of historical theme, was perhaps a novel feature in the whole range of Indian literature. Towards the end of this period, story literature came to be produced in simple campu form, overladen with prose, probably as a reaction against high-flown classics, whose appeal was limited to learned scholars. These works registered a protest against the disproportionate use of Sanskrit and upheld the cause of pure Kannada as the language of the people. Thus we already see here the seeds of the revolutionary outlook, the freedom of experiment and expression, which marked the coming age. There is evidence for the fact that *Vacana* literature, which flourished in the middle of the 12th century, had its beginnings towards the end of this age, probably even earlier. By and large, the ancient period was dominated by the classical trend, though the last years paved the way for a radical change.

CHAPTER V

MEDIEVAL PERIOD—1

EARLY VACANAKĀRAS

ABOUT the middle of the 12th century, a new constellation arose on the Kannada horizon. Every one of the stars in it had its own lustre but no sense of separateness. One was different from the other and yet one was in tune with the other. An emerging pattern held them and they all moved forward to the same rhythm. Allamaprabhu, Basavēśwara and other Vacanakāras formed this group. Their vehicle of expression came to be known as *vacana* i.e., a kind of poetic prose, because it was their spoken style, not the written style. Some of it might have been written by them and some by others. But mainly it was inspired word, that came from their deep experience spontaneously. *Vacana* literature was born in a certain political and socio-religious setting. Politically it was a time when the glory of the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa had been on the downward trend after reaching its zenith in the reign of Vikramāditya VI. Bijjaḷa, a feudatory of the Cālukyas, set aside a weak ruler and usurped the throne. He became a powerful, independent king. He came under the growing influence of traditional institutions. Social inequality was rampant. Violence prevailed in the name of sacrifice and offering to the village deity. There was a regular tussle between the Vedic and the Jaina faiths. Brahmanism had become petrified and hypocrisy reigned supreme. The common people went after many gods and ignored the god of life. Several thoughtful persons sensed that the world was out of joint but did not have either the knowledge or the courage to face the situation. The Vacanakāras appeared at such a critical juncture and scattered widely the seeds of a socio-religious revolution. They gave the electrifying message of equality, of one godhead and of strict morality. They told these things to themselves and then to those near to them. Whatever they preached, they were the first to practise. They gave to Karnatak a rich legacy of spiritual and ethical culture. In the middle of the 12th century, vacana as a form of expression attainedits maturity with all the variety and wealth of which it was capable. But there is evidence to show that it had been current for about a century before, although to a very limited extent. Basavēśwara refers to the vacanas of Ādyas or earlier Vacanakāras and makes mention of Dēvara Dāsimayya, who is assigned to the early part of the 11th century. He even alludes to some Vacanakāras who were either his contemporaries or predecessors.

In Dāsimayya's pithy sayings, we get a foretaste of the spiritual feast, which was going to follow a hundred years later. For example, we have an epigram like 'the tongue of a man in fever will never relish fresh milk' or harsh satire as in 'Don't you believe the devotion of an impostor. It is like a cat in a monastery which jumps at a mouse'. At times, his sarcasm is too harsh and his language rather rough. That subtle rhythm and softness, which is peculiar to vacana prose, is lacking. Among the Vacanakāras, who lived at the time of Basavēśwara, Sakalēśa Mādarasa was an elderly contemporary, who wrote nearly a hundred vacanas. They showed an improvement on earlier vacanas and prepared the ground for the mysticism and the social philosophy of Basavēśwara.

Allamaprabhu

One of the most remarkable personalities of this period was Allamaprabhu, who was not only senior to Basavēśwara and other saints but also the tallest among them in respect of knowledge and wisdom. His life is shrouded in mystery, but doubtless he was one of the most detached persons and a perfect *jñāni*. He became the leader of those who stood for the *Śarana* way of life and presided over the institution known as 'the bower of experience' (Anubhavamanṭapa).

With all this, it must be said that he was not rigidly bound to any creed or dogma. He appreciated what was good in all paths and in all seekers. He criticised their defects as well. All religions, including the Vīraśaiva faith, came in for his severe criticism, whenever they were bogged in secondary notions and external forms. But the severity of his criticism coming as it did from a truth-loving *jñāni* was inspired by the desire to do good to all and to help seekers to progress in their chosen path. That is why it was welcomed by all. Many of his vacanas are not easy to understand. What he uttered from the depth of mystical experience and from the height of his truth-consciousness was not mere word, it was a hymn or mantra. The core of his vacanas has lent significance to his own saying that word is 'Jyōtirlinga', the light of God incarnate. He had realised that truth which is beyond utterance. He has said, 'Those, who have known the unknowable vast, are quiet as if they don't know. When the mind sees the Vast and speaks of it through a certain word, the experience transcends that word. Lo, has anyone fed the child called the infinite (Nirāḷa), named and called it? Alas, look at the embarrassment of bashful word!' His words, which explain how that experience is beyond the reach of word, come within our reach owing to the power of his speech and his exceptional imagination. One can name and call all children born on earth. But who can name appropriately this child *Nirāḷa?* If *śabda* or word is called on to do this task, it would feel embarrassed and bashful. Because it is aware that this task is beyond its capacity. How vivid is this expression! Even then, just as the shyness of the bride slowly melts away, the shyness of word recedes and it tries to describe the Vast as best it can. We come across such descriptions in the sayings of Allama. Some of them are known as riddles, as they cannot be

generally understood without an explanation of their peculiar symbolism. As literature, they are bereft of clarity due to the very indefiniteness of their imagery. Barring these, there are vacanas which are as clear and charming as they are subtle in meaning. For instance, 'Look at the weariness and agony of people, who would not grasp what they saw but sought what they could not say. With what warm clothing will they cover it, if a whole mountain shivers with cold? How will they clothe it, if the vast plain becomes naked? To what can you liken if a devotee turns into a heretic?' Generally the unique personality of Allama shines with soothing lustre in all his sayings and drives away all the dust in the farthest corners of our minds. It opens to us new horizons, unknown to us before and underlines the inconsistency between our word and deed. It is like a thunderbolt to our ignorance and vanity. But it is not a blow that destroys; it is a blow that makes for growth. For example, 'Oh, they sip the water after washing outwardly without knowing how to wash inwardly. I was astonished to see a god installed in a temple by mortals. I was wonderstruck to see people enjoying themselves by arranging for the daily worship of the eternal and the ineffable. They worship God in stone. It cannot be. This is suckling today a child, which is to be born tomorrow. Why do you want a temple, when there is a temple already in your body? O Lord, if you are turned into a stone, what shall I be?' It is a common belief that it is a religious virtue to build a temple and worship an idol, installed there. This leads to a delusion that the idol itself is the supreme reality. Allamaprabhu pricks the bubble in his own characteristic way. The saints have long since expressed the importance of inner purity and of the omnipresence of God. This very truth in Allamaprabhu's singular manner takes on a subtle imaginative form, with a touch of satire, which pleases though it pierces. It lifts us from conventional truth to the ultimate reality. 'Those who worship stone gods only show their ignorance and make fools of themselves . . . God is not in stone. He is within oneself. He is to be realised by constant effort. That is the child to be born'. In another saying of his, he has praised the importance of self-realisation. Self-knowledge is the great guru, the highest deity. In some of his other vacanas, he has voiced harsh and open criticism of blind adherence to tradition. 'The Vēda is just a text for study. Science is just bazaar gossip. Purāṇa is just a conference of trouble-makers. Logic is lamb-fight. *Bhakti* is profiteering by outward show. Lord Guhēśwara is supreme wealth. Does one became a *Brahmacāri* by smearing ashes and becoming nude? Does one become a *Brahmacāri* by eating food and indulging in bad habits? It is only when thought is bare and the mind is still, that itself is the natural state of self-realisation (*Sahajanirvāṇa*)'. This is a good example of the radical approach of Allama, who was a *jñāni* in *sahajanirvāṇa*, a poet, who had seen the light divine in speech and a seer, who had observed life from his lofty height. That is why his vacanas shine with a radiance that soothes and awakens. It appears that he had known and experienced the secrets and *siddhis* of many

creeds and paths and stood above them. In *Haṭhayōga Pradīpikā*, he is mentioned as Allama Prabhudēva. His *guru* might have been Animiṣha of the Nāthapanṭha. But he refused to be hide-bound. It is no wonder that his liberal and independent personality, which was above a particular religion or sect, found expression in his *vacanas* as thus: 'If one can burn desire and delusion, how does it matter whether he is a *yōgi* or *bhōgi*, *śaiva* or *sanyāsi?* He is great in the eyes of God, he who gives up greed and spurns attachment. Are they really great, those who talk of their own greatness? What has happened to the greatness of such great people? He is a true *śaraṇa*, in whom all talk of great and small has ended'. Allama has described his ideal thus, 'One should move about, not like a storm, which fells down trees, but like a gentle wind, which carries fragrance with it wherever it blows'. He does not want to be a destroyer like the storm but a comforter like the breeze. Not for him the brilliance that dazzles and destroys; he praises the gentle creative lustre, which radiates love and joy all around. His sayings amply show that he had won that lustre. 'A single day has enveloped the infinite of the past and the infinite of the future. The care-free one, who has realised truth, the mighty one, who has conquered death, the great one who has seen the Vast, the joyous one, who is absorbed in the Supreme Being, . . .' the very breath of such a lofty personality became great and exalted vacana. Its spontaneous manifestation through vacana form is not only a singular contribution to Kannada literature but is also a rare gift to Indian and world literature.

Basavēśwara

Basaveśwara was one of the great men of Karnāṭaka—a revolutionary thinker, a radical reformer and a powerful writer. The middle of the 12th century was in a turmoil and was waiting for his advent. Only two ways were open at that time when social life was poisoned by inequality and deadened by inertia. One way was to close one's eyes and blindly follow the old order and the other was to adjust oneself somehow with eyes open. There was also a third way—the way of revolt against it. It was the way of heroism and suffering. Basaveśwara like a true hero decided to walk this way. Even as a boy in his native place, Bāgewāḍi, he protested against his thread ceremony which had lost all meaning. He mastered all the learning of the time under the guidance of a *guru* in Kūḍalasangama and made good progress on the path of devotion. He went to Kalyāṇa and rose to the position of a minister under Bijjaḷa. He declared his social philosophy, based on equality and love. He gave it a spiritual and devotional bias. Men of learning and dedicated seekers of truth from Kāśmīr to Kanyākumāri flocked to him as they were irresistibly attracted by his teaching in 'the bower of experience', which he had built up. Kings became ascetics and ascetics became kings. One such king was Allamaprabhu, who sat on *Sūnya simhāsana* (the throne of Śūnya). Distinction of high and low became a thing of the past in this spiritual domain. Women

enjoyed the same freedom as men in seeking spiritual progress. 'Work is Worship' was the watchword of the day. No profession was considered high, none mean. People came to believe that whatever the profession they chose, the joy and peace of heaven lay in devoted work. Vīraśivism as a system of thought or as a code of conduct was not by itself a new thing. But Basavēśwara revived it in a certain social context. He and the other devotees of Śiva put life into it and popularised it by their own endeavour and achievement.

Basavēśwara was a great devotee of God, well-known as *Bhakti-bhandāri*. He attained this stature as he grew in mind and spirit. We can see it in his sayings at every step. His growth and progress were, of course, in a manner peculiar to him. He laid bare his heart and did not conceal anything from anybody. He unburdened his agony time and again, disclosed his defects to the point of exaggeration and confessed his errors without any reservation. He had a tendency towards forthright and frank introspection, which was more intense than in any other vacanakāra. In his significant aphorism 'No one is smaller than myself and no one is greater than the devotees of God', we find the very core of his personality and not mere humility. In the whole range of Kannada literature, it is difficult to find utterance that surpasses his vacanas in yearning devotion and intrepid introspection. For instance, 'The dirt of a deluge has covered land, which ought to smile with a rich crop. It does not allow me to know, to be alert. O Lord, pray remove all this dirt in the form of my foibles. Give me your succour and I shall grow freely with the utmost abandon. I cry out to you like a mute creature caught in the mire. Alas! there is none to look after me. . . . One can stand the strain if fire is in the oven, not if the whole earth is on fire . . . To whom shall I complain if the mound of the tank were to suck its water, if the fence were to eat the fruit of the tree it is guarding, if the lady of the house were to commit theft at home and if the mother's milk were to turn to poison and kill her offspring? Do not search me closely. If you do so, you will find me hollow. My action is different from my speech. There is absolutely no purity of heart in me. I am like a dog, which licks the blade of a sword, relishing its sweetness'. In vacanas such as these, Basavēśwara comes nearer to us as a human being and seems to be moving in our midst and taking hold of our hearts. In these vacanas, ordinary folk hear the throbbing of their own hearts. At the same time, they experience something very much different from themselves. Great men are unhappy when they see that they have not fully realised in their lives the noble ideals which they cherish. Even small errors appear to them as grave blunders. They describe them sometimes in exaggerated language. That itself acts as a spur to their progress. It must be noted that their self-criticism is different from the self-blame of ordinary people. The *vacanas* of Basavēśwara must be viewed from this perspective. There is in them an extremely intense agony of longing, a kind of self-condemnation. In the words which have expressed it, we find utter sincerity, spontaneity and lyrical quality

of great writing—e.g., 'The dirt of a deluge has covered land' etc., which is already quoted, is a remark replete with meaning. That soil, which has the potentiality for abundant growth and where every ear can swell with juice, is covered with this 'dirt of a deluge'. The dirt that collects at the time of the deluge cannot be washed way except by a deluge. Unless it is swept away, it will not make way for a new harvest. The desires of previous births and egoistic feelings pursue the soul and thwart its progress. They often emerge from their hiding and pull down a rising soul. When we observe them carefully and reflect on their dominance, we realise the propriety of the description as 'dirt of a deluge'. This illustrates how in Basavēśwara's *vacanas*, genuine experience finds expression in apt imagery and limpid utterance.

Basavēśwara matured into a true devotee by his persistent endeavour and surrendered himself completely to God. The spirit of total surrender permeated the triune of his body, mind and life. He called himself but a servant and instrument of the Divine. He has described the joy of surrender in a touching manner in *vacanas* such as the following: 'The nectar of your name has filled my speech, your image has filled my sight, your thoughts have filled my mind and your renown has filled my ears. Lord Kūḍalasangama, I am but a bee in the lotus of your feet'. This *vacana* is enriched by a pun on the word *Tumbi*, which as a noun means a bee and as a verbal form 'filled'. 'Make my body, O Lord, the long part of the lute; my head, the bottlegourd; my nerve, the string and my finger the tuning stick. Do sing in all the thirty two *rāgas*. Play on this lute, pressing it to your bosom, O Lord'. These two *vacanas*, though short, have expressed the perfect state of devotion like self-contained lyrics and have proclaimed the greatness of *vacana* literature. Basavaṇṇa wielded great influence as a minister. At the same time he sowed the seeds of a revolution, inspired by the vision of a new social order and spearheaded a new movement. He had to face much opposition from political quarters as well as from conservative sections of society. He must have found his ideal of devotion put on trial every day. He was well aware that 'Bhakti was something which one could not live up to. It cuts you like a saw as it moves forward and backward. If you grasp a venomous snake, will it ever let you go?' The similes given here appeal to us for their novelty and propriety. In some of his *vacanas* we find expression of his fearlessness and unruffled attitude. For instance, 'Whatever is going to befall us let it come today. Whatever is to happen today, let it happen immediately. Who is afraid of it? I am not living by bread alone. I live for a mission. I will not run away from the scene like a timid soldier. O my Lord, death for a mission is as joyous as a festival'. This shows that he was not an escapist, prone to run away from a critical situation. He was prepared to face the consequences of his bold ideas, come what may. Conservative society must have been enraged and shocked by his revolutionary thought and must have threatened to ostracize him. But he did not lose heart. Some of his vacanas pin-point his unshaken self-confidence

and freedom from fear. 'Who can do any harm to me by his anger? What will a whole town in anger do to me? Let them not give their daughter in marriage to my son. Let them not feed my dog in a plate. Can a dog bite a person, riding an elephant, as long as he has God on his side? . . . Why should I go after a poor cow, when a river of milk is flowing near my place? Why feel ashamed? Why should I long for the money in Bijjaḷa's exchequer as long as Lord Sangama is there.' Here is a clear rejoinder to charges, hurled at Basavēśwara that he was squandering public money from Bijjaḷa's treasury to feed devotees of God and carry on the work of social reform. We have allusions to other historical facts in some other sayings, that reveal his personality and describe his work for the cause, that he espoused.

In his *vacanas*, Basavēśwara has depicted vividly the state of affairs that prevailed in the society of his time just as he has mirrored clearly the state of his mind. He has put his finger unerringly on the shortcomings of society in a frank and forthright manner. He has also laid down the guidelines for a new social order. Our people have been accustomed for long to running after many deities with steadfast faith in none. If a person is sick, as many doctors as possible must examine and treat him. All medicines must be given. Besides, the presiding deity of the village must be propitiated. This is true in matters of religion as well. One is not satisfied with worshipping any number of gods to wipe out one's sin or remove one's misery. One is not satisfied with following any number of Gurus of any number of sects. Basavaṇṇa says, 'You shave your head when you see a devotee of Śiva. You strip yourself when you see a Jaina monk. You utter the name of Hari when you meet a Brahmin. You imitate all those whom you meet. What shall I say to those ignorant people, who think they are reputed devotees by bowing to other gods, when they are worshipping Kūḍalasangama?' Another defect which Basavaṇṇa saw in individuals and groups was hypocrisy. He condemned it wherever he found it in devotees of Śiva or in others. 'Do not put a price on the ash in the oven. Besmear it as you like. What is the good of besmearing it outwardly when you have no sign of goodness at heart? The Lord will never like those hypocrites who talk of many things when they purpose to say but one thing. . . . Worship without devotion, action without affection—all that is like the loveliness of a figure in a picture—so unreal. It is like a sugarcane drawn beautifully on a piece of paper. It will delight you if you embrace it but does not taste sweet if you want to eat it. It will only look like a sugar-cane'. This simile is drawn from everyday life and is fascinating.

One of the glaring defects which Basavaṇṇa found in the society of his time was an inordinate desire to set right others' foibles and ignore one's own. In a fear-ridden and pretentious society, we find this sad lack of self-criticism or this tendency to remove the mote in the other man's eye, forgetting the beam in one's own. The values of life turn topsyturvy. Basavaṇṇa has diagnosed this social malaise ably. He says, 'why do you go about reforming the world? Take care of your

own body and mind. God does not like those who just weep at the sorrow of the neighbour. . . . Is the master of the house inside the house? With the grass grown on the threshold and with the dust settled in the house, is the owner in or no? No, he is not there with the body full of falsehood and the mind filled with desire'. The query and the image in the second vacana are quite significant. When one sees the ways of modern civilized societies, one is tempted to ask the same question today. Some of his *vacanas* like the following expose the superstition in matters of worship, caste etc. 'They hasten to pour milk on a stone serpent. But when they see a real snake, they hasten to kill it. When a devotee who can eat what is offered to him presents himself, unceremoniously they ask him to go, whereas they offer a bowl of rice to Linga, which cannot eat. He who kills is the real outcaste, he who eats the filthy stuff is a foul person. What is their caste after all? All devotees of God Śiva, who desire nothing but the well-being of all living creatures, alone are real śaranas'. Some of this criticism of social conditions is, of course, harsh in tone but it is inspired by righteous rage. It strives to expose the falsehood and the deceit in the followers of Vedic as well as non-vedic faiths, including Vīraśaivas. It is not prompted by hatred of any individual or group but it certainly exhales disgust for the social order of the day, which was full of injustice and inequality. It was Basavaṇṇa's vision and ideal to build a new society based on compassion and equality. He, therefore, condemned the institution of yajña, which preached a meaningless violence and animal sacrifice, offered to deities. He also rejected the *varṇāśrama* system, which had resulted in social disparity. Whatever the merits of that system when it first came into being, it had degenerated into a blind tradition and had become the breeding house of irreligion and immorality. It was a crying need of the hour to protest against this degeneracy.

Many *vacanas* of Basavaṇṇa show that behind all his criticism, there was a positive view of life. He says, 'This mortal world is the mint of the Lord. Those, who prove genuine here, will prove genuine there (in the next world). Those who do not do so here will be treated as counterfeit there also'. This world is like God's mint. A coin considered genuine in the mint will continue in the same way outside; and so too a counterfeit coin.

The life of man on earth must be ethical and religious; it is thus that it ensures the right reward and the right value in heaven as well. 'Can there be a religion without love and compassion? One must have love towards all living beings. Love is the basis of all religion'. What is this love if it is not love for its own sake and of the purest kind? 'Remember that there is no such region as heaven or earth. Whenever you speak truth, it is heaven, and whenever you speak untruth, it is earth. Good conduct is heaven, bad conduct is hell'. Basavēśwara attached as much importance to soft speech as to truthfulness and good conduct. 'It is heaven itself if you say Ayyā' (Sir) and it is hell itself if you say 'elavo' (you, fellow). In this pithy remark,

he has put in a nut-shell the value of decency in speech, in a manner which will carry conviction to the man in the street.

We have so far tried to show the high quality of these vacanas as literature. Even when we examine them one by one, we are wonder-struck by the spontaneous power of their imagination, feeling and expression. This is illustrated by the following *vacana*. 'I have been like the bride who has had her oil bath and who has put on the most splendid robes and worn the most charming jewels, but has not won the heart of her husband'. This imagery is significant, being suggestive of the state of mind of a devotee of God, who has done every possible *sādhanā* but has not succeeded in realising the highest joy. Some of the *vacanas* which reveal the depth of inner consciousness and which flow from mystical height have the power and charm of Upaniṣadic utterance. There are in the *vacanas* any number of proverbs and idioms, taken from the popular speech of the day, as a result of which some of the subtle thought in vacana literature is understood. Unlike some of the *vacanas* of Allamaprabhu, the *vacanas* of Basavēśwara are crystal clear. Great thought and sincerity go hand in hand in some of them.

Basavēśwara was one of the great personalities of mediaeval India. His sayings, which reflect the best in Vīraśaiva faith and universal religion, are a great gift of Kannada to Indian and world literature.

Akkamahādēvi and other Vacanakāras

Akkamahādēvi

Akkamahādēvi is one of the brightest stars in the constellation of *vacanakāras*. By the uniqueness of her personality and the greatness of her utterance, she stands out as a great poetess. For ought we know, she is the first poetess in the history of Kannada literature. Even if Kanti, mentioned earlier, were a real figure and not a figment of fancy, her meagre compositions which have come down to us are but examples of dexterous verse and not songs of the heart, emanating from genuine experience. Akkamahādēvi was among the pioneers in blending lofty spiritual experience with spontaneous expression in poetic prose. The story of her life is itself thrilling. A lovely maiden born in a poor family, she became the victim of the passion of king Kauśika, who longed to marry her. According to one version, she spurned his offer and went away in search of her Lord, Cennamallikārjuna. According to another version, nearer in time to her, she married Kauśika on three conditions. When she found that the king violated them and stood in the way of her pious life, she left the palace and renounced the world. Whichever version be true, it is clear that she did austere *sādhanā* with an overmastering desire to see the Lord, who was her true lover. Perfect in her surrender, she realised him and was bathed in bliss. She went to Kalyāṇa where Allamaprabhu and Basavēśwara had founded the Anubhavamanṭapa, shed her spiritual light and proceeded to Śrīśaila, where she attained union with her Lord.

Her *vacanas* are the outpourings of a highly sensitive and daring soul. They reflect the subtle stages of her *sādhanā*, her joys and sorrows on the path of realisation, being couched in imagery and language of literary excellence. Her ecstacy and her ultimate realisation have found adequate expression in her *vachanas*. In the very first step she took in her *sādhanā*, we can see her aversion to worldly life and her devout prayer to the Lord: 'Like the silk-worm that dies entangled in the yarn of its own creation, I am burning in my own wanton longings. O Lord, help me to get rid of my evil desire and turn my mind towards you. Pray destroy my vanity, dispel the darkness of my body and take away the sloth of my soul. Liberate me from the enveloping mesh of this world'. From this general feeling about wordly life, she proceeds to the state of mind of a spiritual beloved that is characteristic of her. The highest form of love, the madness, the agony of separation, the frantic seeking and the joy of union have found intense expression in her *vacanas*. For example, 'My Lord, listen or turn away as you will but I cannot but sing about you; my Lord, respond or not as you will, but I cannot refrain from admiring you; my Lord, like it or not as you will, but I cannot remain without embracing you; look at me or not as you will. But I cannot help looking at you and rejoicing. The sorrow-striken heart has turned upside down. The cool breeze burns. Moonlight has turned into scorching noonlight. I am pining like the octroi collector of the town . . . . Oh bees, mango, tree, moonlight and cuckoo, I beg but one thing of you all. Pray show my Lord . . . . I felt happy in the company of my lover, who is without a body and boundless. I ask for nothing else. I felt as if fresh water had flooded a parched tank and as if a downpour had watered a famished sapling'. So she sounds the entire gamut of god-love; her *vacanas* are a few in number but are gems of great excellence. Later, Akkamahādēvi has described her spiritual marriage and her long penance to win god Śiva for her husband: 'O Lord, I did penance for numberless years to win you as my consort. A bower built on water with a roof of fire, they erected a seat of hailstone. They joined in wedlock the bride without legs and the bridegroom without head. They gave me in marriage to my husband Cennamallikārjuna for an inseparable union'. In *vacanas* such as these, the central feeling of what may be called *Adhyātma śṛngāra* (spiritualised sentiment of love) has manifested itself with all its attendant variations and has brought the freshness of a new sentiment to a mind weary of the monotony of conventional *eros*. Akkamahādēvi's enlightenment and devotion had given her singular freedom from care and fear. They are a source of noble inspiration. The following vacanas illustrate what strength of spirit she had acquired by standing up to calumny and contempt in the course of her *sādhanā*. 'Why be afraid of wild beasts when you have made your home on the top of a mountain? Why be afraid of ebb and tide when you have made your home on the shore of the sea? Why be afraid of noise when you have made your home in the heart of a bazaar? Oh Lord, having been born into this world, one

must learn to be serene in the face of praise or blame .... When hungry, I can live on alms. When thirsty, I can drink the water of the well and the pond. When sleepy, I can rest in old temples. And all along, O Lord, you are the companion of my soul. O my heart, grieve not that you are alone with none to protect. I am not afraid whatever happens. I can live on withered leaf, I can lay my head on a dagger. If my Lord fells me prostrate, I shall offer body and life at his feet and emerge purified .... If sparks of fire fly about me, I shall say my thirst and hunger are satisfied. If the very heavens burst a downpour, I shall say I am being given a bath. If the rock falls on me, I shall say it is a flower to deck me with. O Lord, if I am beheaded, I shall say my life is laid at your feet'. These *vacanas* show the exceptional courage, with which she faced the ordeal of life. Her composure, fearlessness and freedom from anxiety steadily rise to their very acme in thought and expression. There can be no better evidence of her realisation than the simple and spontaneous imagery and diction which bring out the strength of her spirit.

In some of her sayings, she has spoken of her life-vision in succinct and striking images: 'If you can remove the poisonous fang of the snake and play with it, it is good to be in its company .... Life in hell with the awareness of the Lord is itself salvation, life in heaven without that awareness is hell itself. Happiness without your love is misery whereas misery with your love is bliss itself .... What is the good of knowing all unless one knows one's self'. Besides, she has commented on the social conditions of the time in her forthright manner now and then. *Yogāngatrividhi* is a small but significant bunch of verses by her in *tripadi* metre. It gives us an insight into the wealth of her mystical experience. On the whole, Akkamahādēvi has revealed a unique personality by combining erotic sentiment and spirituality and pouring it into the malleable mould of vacana prose. She richly deserves a high place among the greatest women of Karnataka and India.

Among the other *vacanakāras*, Cennabasavēśwara, who was the nephew of Basavēśwara, was praised by Allamaprabhu as a *mahājñāni*, a great knower, but he was different from him in some respects. He excelled in analysing and expounding the philosophic content of Vīraśaiva faith and thus helped it spread. Essentially many of his vacanas possess literary quality. But rarely do they rise to great heights. Another well-known personality, who was both a *yōgi* and *karmi* was Siddharāma of Sonnalige. He became a *jñāni* and *karma-yōgi* with the blessings of Prabhudēva and Cennabasava. We gather about the development of his personality from his utterances. He, who at one time took delight in building tanks and temples, realised later that God does not reside in stone. In one of his *vacanas* he says 'These small men nod their heads and say God is in stone. If it is said God is in stone but not in clay, it is a flaw in the perfection of the All-pervading'. This is how he attained enlightenment. And thus he learnt the skill in action, the art of detachment. His *vacanas*

are bright literary pieces, testifying to the wealth of his experience and the growth of his personality. Several other mystics, both men and women, lived during this most fecund period in Kannada literature. Among them a small number were princes, ministers and pandits but a large number of them were common people plying their own humble profession and mostly illiterate. And yet their urge for spiritual upliftment and for self-expression was something phenomenal. Fortunately all their *vacanas* have come down to us. These show how they were seriously engaged in their calling, with the motto *Kāyakave Kailāsa* (work itself is God's abode) on their lips and with no sense of high or low in respect of each other's profession. Such names as Ambigara Caudayya i.e., Caudayya, the ferryman or fisherman, Mōligeya Mārayya i.e., Mārayya, the wood-cutter, Nuliya Candayya i.e., Candayya, the yarn maker and Madivaḷa Mācayya i.e., Mācayya, the washerman indicate their special professions. All these were received with equal warmth in the assembly of mystics, which was known as *Śivānubhavamanṭapa*. Along with Akkamahādēvi, other women mystics like Mahādēvi, Bijjaḷadēvi, Kālawwe and Nīlamma were held in equal esteem. More than 200 names of *Vacanakāras* have come down to us. The middle of the 12th century was a period of unprecedented harvest in the spiritual soil of Karnāṭaka. In this period, even ordinary people were elevated by their contact with towering personalities. By their own *sādhanā*, they also became Śaranas. Generally speaking, the *vacanas* of all the *Vacanakāras* deal with renunciation, devotion, mystical experience, theory and practice of religion, criticism of hypocricy in society and praise of Śaranas. In some of them, there may be just imitation of older writers and consequently literary quality may be lacking. But many of the vacanas have a ring of sincerity and genuine spiritual experience about them.

Most of these *vacanas* are short lyrical pieces with three or four sentences of unified expression. At the end of every *vacana*, one finds the emblem of the particular deity of an individual *vacanakāra*, clearly indicating its authorship. A few *vacanas* are long enough. The following *vacana* of Simmaligeya Cennarāma in the form of an episode is extremely significant. 'A man was passing through a thick forest when he was attacked by a tiger, wild fire, a she-demon and wild elephant, each of them bearing down on him from a different direction. He was terrified at the sight and did not know what to do; he then saw an old well. While trying to jump into it, he beheld a snake below and was taken aback. He held fast to a creeper, bitten by mice and was suspended in mid-air. Even when the honey-bees were stinging him, he sipped a drop of honey, that fell on the tip of his nose'. When we come to think of it, all happiness in this life, this abode of sorrow is like the joy of that person who is tasting honey in the midst of danger all round.

It is necessary to consider the literary form or pattern of these *vacanas* as a whole and their special features. Briefly, they may be called spiritual lyrics written in mystical prose, which is enriched by

the Kannada idiom of the medieval period. It is rare to find literary patterns similar to them in world literature. They are, of course, new to Kannada. Though simple literary prose, reflective prose and prose, partly lyrical in quality are found in the Holy Bible, the writings of à Kempis and Marcus Aurelius respectively, we nowhere get examples of mystical prose, characteristic of *vacana* writing. We shall not be doing justice to it by merely labelling it as poetic prose. The *vacanas* are as spontaneous and imaginative in their expression as they are deep and subtle in their experience. They have expressed the higher truths of existence by copious and apt use of popular illustrations, idioms and proverbs. If some of them reveal the emotional intensity of a devotee, unburdening himself before his Master with real humility, some others contain a frank and fearless criticism of drawbacks in social life. Some of the *vacanakāras* have explained their spiritual experience in terms of their own profession.

Vacana is both literary and philosophic. It is literary because it is based on one's own intimate experience and also because it shows an aesthetic approach. It is philosophic because it contains a definite view of life and code of conduct. *Vacana* is principally literature of high order, though this does not mean that all the *vacanas* can be classed as excellent.

Vacanas are described as Upanishads in the Kannada language. In a sense, it is a very appropriate description. But *vacana* can lay claim to a pattern and manner, with comments on social ethics and religious code, which we do not find in the Upanishads. *Vacana* literature constitutes a rich gift of Kannada to Indian and world literature.

Harihara

Turning from the middle of the 12th century to the dawn of the 13th century, we come across three poets of intense devotion to God viz., Harihara, Rāghavānka and Padmarasa. They were equally inspired by the path of surrender to the Lord, shown by Basaveśwara and other saints and by the rich legacy of vacana literature. They turned it to good account each in his own way. They wrote poetical works but did not write vacanas. They opened up new avenues of writing and chose new themes and metres for their works. This applies more precisely to Harihara and Rāghavānka. Harihara was a great poet of devotion to God Śiva. From his works, we can visualize a vivid personality of devotional ardour. His works are *Pampāśataka*, *Rakṣhāśataka*, *Mudigeya Aṣṭaka*, *Girija-Kalyāṇa* and *Śivagaṇada Ragaḷegaḷu*. In the first two works, having a hundred stanzas each, there is an autobiographical element, indicating how Harihara released himself from the shackles of worldly life only to be an intense devotee of the Lord. More important than anything else, he declared in these poems unequivocally the end and aim of his poetry as follows: 'I can never praise other gods like Viṣṇu and Brahma. I have sold my tongue to Siva'. He appealed to his fellow poets not to degenerate by writing

poems in praise of mortals but to 'praise and adore God Śiva only day and night'. Thus Harihara set up a new tradition in Kannada poetry and gave it a new orientation. Several Veeraśaiva poets, who followed him, adopted 'Hariharamarga' i.e., the path of Harihara.

Girijākalyāṇa is a *campu* work by Harihara, bearing the stamp of his individual genius. The marriage of Śiva and Pārvati as narrated in Śaiva purāṇas and in Sanskrit poetry is its main theme. Harihara was primarily concerned with portraying as graphically as he could the character and personality of Pārvati in the form of Girijā. Since he focused his attention on her, he called his work *Girijākalyāṇa.* The work of Kālidāsa, dealing with the same theme, is called *Kumāra-sambhava.* The difference in the outlook of both is seen in the very titles of their works. The work of Harihara concludes with the marriage of Girijā, whereas the work of Kāḷidāsa ends with the death of demon Tāraka at the hands of Kumāra, born of the union of Śiva and Pārvati. The story of *Girijākalyāṇa* moves rather slowly, as it teems with a number of descriptions. It is only in the latter half that the story gathers momentum and the descriptions are relevant in the context. This shows that Harihara was a gifted story teller, who knew how and when to speed up his narration. His narrative art is at its best when he gets occasions to depict intense feelings of joy, anger, devotion and bravery. All his powers then warm up and aspire to scale the heights of creative expression. For instance, we may allude to situations in which Cupid was burnt to ashes by the third eye of Śiva, causing sorrow of separation to Rati, wife of Cupid and indignation to Pārvati, whose love was spurned by her Lord. In the course of her lamentation, Rati cries out saying, 'O, Madana, you thought that you would conquer Śiva with your flowery arrow. How am I to know that you would be burnt down by the fire of his eye in the forehead? I wonder if you chose to lie on the couch of Śiva's fiery eye, thinking that the bed made of fur was too hard to use'. She begs of Pārvati to revive her husband and receives assurance of help from her. Self-respecting as Pārvati was, she practised austere penance and succeeded in attracting Śiva to the place of her penance in the disguise of an urchin. He abused Śiva in her presence and angered her. She struck him with ashes and made him reveal his identity. The poet concludes this situation with a beautiful comment to the effect, 'Can pretence stand in the presence of truth even though it is put up by God Śiva'! In *Girijākalyāṇa* we have on the whole a *campu* work of Harihara stamp which departs from the beaten track and exhibits its own brilliance and movement. Harihara tried to find a golden mean between the tradition of classical poetry and the spirit of change as evident in vacana literature but he did not quite succeed in doing so. He lost his sense of propriety and love of liberty as he fell a prey to the poetic convention of eighteen modes of description. The character of Pārvati oscillates between human and divine traits. With all this, his exceptional genius found vent in his imagery and diction and we have a foretaste of the sweet fare which followed in his later works.

Śivanganada Ragaḷegaḷu i.e., biographies of Śaiva saints gave him vast scope for the fullest expression of his personality. They are said to be 120 in number and they vary in length and quality but the same intensity and maturity inform them. One differs from the other in its story pattern, based mainly on traditional sources; but we can see the hand of the same genius in its poetic form, description, diction and general tenor, so much so that we can identify the work without even finding the name of the author anywhere. *Ragaḷe* is a kind of metrical composition with lilting couplets, unrestricted in their number. It was used by classical poets for descriptive themes intermittently in the course of their works. But Harihara was the first poet to make an extensive use of them in his poetic biographies. He evolved a new pattern of campu by writing alternately one canto in complete verse of Ragaḷe metre and another in entire prose. *Basavarājadēvara ragaḷe* is one of the finest biographies by Harihara. As such, it occupies a high place in Kannada poetry. In this work, the poet has depicted with deep understanding the life and personality of Basavēśwara, the great Vīraśaiva saint.

He sought to derive two-fold delight in writing this work, firstly he could depict Basvaṇṇa's inner life and secondly in doing so, he would find self-expression as an ardent devotee. An outstanding quality of this work is the poet's profound regard for the hero of the poem and his complete identification with his personality. Where the reader of his poetry is likely to feel overtones of feeling and exuberance of diction, Harihara might have felt that he did less than justice to his theme. So intensely charged with emotion is this biography. An uninterrupted flow of imagery and diction characterises it from the very beginning. The poet knows quite well where to speed up the narration and take up the delineation of character. It is clear that his main purpose is to present a vivid portrayal of his hero.

When Basavaṇṇa was born with a high sense of mission, it was as if auspicious time had assumed a male form. He showed deep devotion to the Lord even as a child. His parents died when he was very young. He grew up under the fostering care of his grand-mother who was a devotee of God Śiva *par excellence*. He was fully engrossed in thoughts of Śiva. Afterwards, he tore away the sacred thread as it resembled a creeper of his 'Karma' or fate and proceeded from Bāgewādi, his birth-place to Kappadisangama, where he received his education and initiation to a spiritual life. There he went to a temple of Śankara and suddenly felt enthused as if he remembered the long-forgotten past. He lay prostrate before God in the hall of worship. He got up saying 'O my Lord, protect me with all your care. You are my vision and you are my mainstay'. Moved deeply by devotion, he fell into a swoon with the name of the Lord on his lips. God looked on him with great mercy, entered his mind and said, 'Don't you fear, Basava. I shall keep you away from the cycle of birth and take care of you so that the whole world will admire'. The entire passage is a good example of the warmth and intensity of emotion, which characterises this work.

Basava is engaged day and night in the worship of god Śiva. Harihara has described in a very touching manner how he went about plucking flowers for worship. He considered no detail as insignificant as it contributes to the full understanding of his hero. For instance, he says that even a moment of separation from the Lord while plucking the flowers appeared to him to be millions of ages whereas even an age of worship appeared to be just a moment. Though exaggerated, this looks natural in the particular context.

Once God met Basava in his dream and asked him to go to Mangaḷawāda, the place where king Bijjala ruled. But the very idea of being torn away from his Lord gave him such deep pain that he cried his heart out and embracing him, said 'Oh, my Lord, I am undone. Should you ask me to go and not see my agony? Having been a support to one descending from the sky, should you let him down? Having been a soothing shower to one, charred in a forest fire, should you desert him? Having been a raft to one, sinking in deep sea, should you give him the go-by?' The passage goes on in this strain. What an earnestness and agony the words here convey! The poet has used very simple and short sentences with a pathetic ring about them. He has as it were poured forth the agony of his own soul through the pathetic wailings of Basavaṇṇa.

Later in the poem, there is a tense dramatic situation. Some orthodox die-hards full of jealousy and spite for Basavaṇṇa tried to malign him. They were present in the court of Bijjaḷa when a gardener presented the king with a bunch of kētaka flowers. Bijjaḷa took out a petal from it and gave it to Basavaṇṇa. He offered it to the Linga in his jewel casket. At once one of the die-hards got up and remarked that according to the Śaiva scripture, no one was permitted to offer kētaka flower to the Lord. To this Basava said that God would accept anything given by a devotee. Bijjaḷa wanted to know the proof for it. Basava showed that when all the caskets of devotees present there were opened, they contained the same kētaka petal. Bijjaḷa fell at his feet and made amends for his folly. On another occasion, the same die-hards slandered to Bijjaḷa about the growing influence of śaraṇas on Basava. They alleged that all the jewels in the royal exchequer were to be found on the person of those people. Bijjaḷa believed the slanderers and took Basava to task saying, 'Should you betray me thus when I have put you in charge of the treasury with full trust in you? Should you ruin me by offering the whole kingdom to your śaranas? No more of it. You must make up for the loss now and here'. Basavaṇṇa reacted sharply and said with great self-confidence: 'Oh king Bijjaḷa, you do not know the ways of good men. Does the ocean crave for the river-water? Does the sun long for the light of the mirror? Do devotees hanker after your jewels? They took what was their due'. When he took all of them to the treasury, they saw that the wealth there had become millionfold. Then the jealous slanderers turned pale and king Bijjaḷa hung his head in shame. Ṣaranas were themselves beside with joy. Basavaṇṇa roared like God Rudra himself, 'Don't you make

a fool of yourself by vaunting your pomp and your pelf! Kubera became the lord of wealth because he gave a portion of it to the servants of the great Almighty. The sun became the repository of lustre because he gave a portion of his light to them. Where are you then, a tiny atom, a little creature, a ball of clay and a doll of cloth, wire-pulled by māyā, a serf of the serf in the house of the Lord'.

Situations such as these, which might have been treated as miracles by ordinary poets, have become intensely dramatic by the magic touch of Harihara's genius. He has succeeded in depicting the conflicts and the tensions that prevailed in that revolutionary period. More than anything else, he has brought out in full form the personality of Basavaṇṇa as a great devotee and reformer. Among other ragaḷes, Nambiyaṇṇana ragaḷe is as impressive as Basavarājaḍēvara ragaḷe in richness of fancy and power of diction. But it is of a different type and order. The portrayal of Nambiyaṇṇa which had to be faithful to the original in Ṣaiva tradition is not as edifying or as complete as the life story of Basavēṣwara. Even then it reveals great artistry in elaborating erotic and humorous situations. The prose in this work is more powerful than the verse. In the remaining *ragaḷes*, *Ṭirunīlakantha ragaḷe* and *Mahāḍēviyakkana ragaḷe* hold our attention for their narrative interest. *Prabhuḍēvara ragaḷe* and *Rēvaṇasiddhēṣwara ragaḷe* appeal to us for the greatness of personality, which they depict. Though a small one in length *Gundayyana ragaḷe* charms us by the rhythm and tempo of the cosmic dance (*Ruḍranātya*). Harihara is undoubtedly one of the great poets in the realm of Kannada letters. He is easily the tallest among those who are both scholars and devotees of God Śiva. He was a unique poet, who dedicated his life to *Bhakṭi* and poured forth the best in him in his works, reflecting the intensity of his emotion and the maturity of his genius.

Rāghavānka

Rāghavānka was a nephew of Harihara and his beloved disciple also. He learned at his feet and became a scholar as well as a devotee. Like a good disciple, he walked with his own gait on the path, shown by his *Guru*. The influence of Harihara is clear from his affirmation that he would not call himself a votary of god Śiva if he praised other gods and mortals with the same tongue with which he praised Śiva, the Lord of Hampi. Though he derived inspiration from Harihara in respect of the goal, the nature of the theme and the language of poetry, he showed originality in the matter of form, plot and mode of treatment. Harihara wrote at least one *campu* work; Rāghavānka did not write even one. Harihara wrote almost all his works in the ragaḷe form; Rāghavānka wrote all his works in the *ṣatpadi* form. If we find increasing exuberance in Harihara's writing, we notice a growing restraint in Rāghavānka. In the best of Harihara's writing, there is all the swiftness and grandeur of a rapid downstream, whereas in the best of Rāghavānka's creation, there is the steady flow of a river in the plains, full to the brim. Four of his works viz., *Sōmanāthacarite*, *Vīrēṣacarite*,

Siḍḍharāmacaritra and *Hariṣcandrakāvya* are extant. They were probably composed in this very order. *Sōmanāthacarite* contains the story of Ādayya of Sourāṣṭra, who came to Puligere, modern Laksmēśwara in north Karnāṭaka, installed the image of Sōmanātha there, performed miracles and converted Jains to Śaivism. This work owes its origin to *Āḍayyana ragaḷe* of Harihara but contains some original situations which brighten the story. That part of the story, which depicts the character and personality of Ādayya, is powerful indeed. However, there is lack of coherence in the story structure, defect in characterisation, conventionality in description and unevenness in style. The dialogue between Ādayya and the recluse in a crucial moment is a good example of the dramatic art of Rāghavānka which was to blossom forth latter. On the whole, *Sōmanāthacarite* is an imperfect work although it does have flashes of the poet's genius. His *Vīrēṣacarite* is a short poem, dealing with the well-known theme, pertaining to the destruction of the sacrifice of Dakṣa by Vīrabhadra, who was born of God Śiva's wrath. This also is influenced by a similar work by Harihara but it is not just a replica. The significant change, which the poet has made in the story content by attributing the extreme fury of Dakṣa to deliberate insult and not to inadvertence on the part of Śiva, is quite appropriate. There is a rising tempo in the depiction of the sentiment of the terrible (Rouḍra) and an agility of movement. The choice of uddanḍa ṣaṭpadi for the theme is apt and the style is brisk. The image of Vīrēśa or Vīrabhadra is grand indeed. The poem is strewn over with ideas and phrases, shooting forth like sparks with the speed of storm. But the grandeur of the poem is not matched by detachment and discrimination. His third work *Siḍḍharāmacaritra* is a longer work of 9 cantos. It deals with the life-story of Siddharāma of Sonnalige, a well-known *yōgi* and *vacanakāra* of the 12th century. He has been extolled as a *kārana-ruḍra* and a *jñāni* and not just a human being. His birth and boyhood, his power and his work have been described as extraordinary. This biography declares that he was a man of miracles, who went about building tanks and parks and lifting sinners from the morass of vice. There is no scope for character development as Siḍdharāma was born a *siḍḍha* and not one, aspiring to became a siḍḍha. In the first few *sandhis* and a few other portions later, we have moving situations. For instance, the poet has juxtaposed two pathetic situations to great effect, the sorrow of separation of the mother of Siddhama when he was found suddenly missing and the piteous cry of Siddharāma, who had met and missed God Mallinātha, whom he looked upon as his mother. Among other characters in this poem, Billēśa Bommayya enlists our sympathy as a sinful person, who repented and was rescued from hell by Siddharāma. He had come to Sonnalige and lived as a faked pupil of Siddharāma, after committing theft, driven to it by poverty and indebtedness. Polished in his speech and neat in his dress, he walked about, hiding hundred sins within himself like the lid of an earthen pot covered with soft grass. Those, who had lost their jewels, detected and caught hold of him in the centre of the town. He did

not yield to any pressures for the stolen property and killed himself with a sword. He went to hell but muttered the name of Siddharāma, who rescued him from there and restored him to good life. This poem testifies to the increasing grip of Rāghavānka over his narrative art.

The greatest achievement of Rāghavānka is his poem, entitled *Hariścandra Kāvya*. There is evidence in it to show that his genius flowered forth and shed the sectarian bias in keeping with the creed of a genuine poet. His confident statement to the effect that no other work equals his work appears to be mostly true. The story of Hariścandra is as old as the hills, found in different forms in Vēda, Purāṇa and classical poetry. Rāghavānka has admitted that he took the seed of the story from the past and made it grow into a big 'poetic tree' by his nurture. The novelty of this poem lies in the original presentation of an age-old theme. It is a matter of pride that when we compare it to the old sources known to us, we observe that it is not only new to Kannada but it also has a story structure which is strikingly new to literature in any other Indian language. However much one might say that for the sake of truth Hariścandra underwent all that suffering following his abdication, he would not have commanded our respect if the story of his travail for truth had not been told with convincing art.

A poet with an original approach was needed to narrate the story of Hariṣchanḍra convincingly without adhering to any particular source. Rāghavānka was one such poet, whom Kannada language was fortunate in having. Why did Viśwāmitra think of persecuting Hariścanḍra persistently? Why was Hariścanḍra driven to offer his all and sell himself, his wife and son? One must get a cogent reply to these and other questions. Rāghavānka has tried to answer them either by a novel presentation of old situations or by a creation of new situations. He has thus exhibited the greatness of his narrative art. The episode of Vaśiṣṭha and Viśwāmitra is an excellent example for the former and that of Hariścandra and the three damsels for the latter. In the former episode, Inḍra once asked sage Vaśiṣṭha in his court whether there was a king on earth, who did not deviate from truth even once. Vaśiṣṭha replied yes and suggested the name of Hariścandra. This enraged Viśwāmitra, because Indra did not put the question to him (maybe he would have mentioned the name of Hariścandra himself if he had been asked) also because he had vowed to counter anything that Vaśiṣṭha said and by nature also he was pre-disposed to see evil and not good in life. So Viśwāmitra stood up with extreme anger and shouted at the top of his voice: 'Stop this nonsense!' Here we have the germ of the story properly laid. There could not be a more natural justification for the wrath of Viśwāmitra. Once we concede the cause of the conflict between the two sages, the dispute and the oath become inevitable. Viśwāmitra took the oath that he would expose Hariścandra as untruthful and falsify his opponent's claim. He darted out from Indra's court, yelling like a thunderbolt. How powerful is the close of this episode! As Rāghavānka has said, Hariścandra

became a victim to the conflict of Vaśiṣṭha and Viśwāmitra just as a tree is razed to the ground in the duel between two buffaloes.

Viśwāmitra employed one device after another to test the truthfulness of Hariścandra. One of them was the creation of wild birds and beasts, which destroyed the standing crops of his subjects. Hariścandra went a-hunting when he heard the woeful account of his people's suffering. He slipped into the hermitage of Viśwāmitra unknowingly while in hot pursuit of an illusory boar, created by the sage and lay down for rest. Viśwāmitra was all glee, saying to himself that the king was well caught in his snare and that he would undo him. He gave a yell and produced two damsels from out of nothing. In a sense they were not born of nothing. Because they were born out of the wrath, hatred and unprovoked hostility, which are the real enemies of a sage. Low-born and dark in colour, they stood as emblems of the low mentality of their creator and asked him 'What is your command to us?' Viśwāmitra said, 'you use all your lures and entice the king'. The innovation of this poem consists in the creation of these damsels with their tempting tactics. We can see from the situations and the dialogues that follow that it has contributed immensely to the beauty of this poem. These low-born damsels, who are the products of Rāghavānka's original genius will remain for all time to come as temptresses *par excellence* in the realm of Kannada poetry. They sang a charming song in order to remove the king's fatigue. The king was so pleased with their music that he gave away all his jewels to them. They did not want all that. They asked for his pearl-studded umbrella. The king declined to do so as it was an emblem of his kingship. 'Well then' said they, 'take us as your wives'. How can a king marry low-born maids? The king said no. The dialogue that takes place between the king and the damsels in this context brings out both the sides of the eternal question of caste with very apt analogy. It would be interesting to reproduce some of it in translation.

Hariścandra: We have not come across kings, equal in every respect to the scions of the sun-family (Sūrya Kula) and ready to offer their daughters in marriage to us. Oh, How strange! Is it the time-spirit or the nature of the land on which we are resting that low-born girls should want to marry me?

Girls: How good is the flesh of the udder that yields pure milk? How good is the bee that gives sweet honey? How good is the navel of the wild animal, that holds the fragrant *kastūri?* Are they not offered to the Lord? If one has excellent qualities, what defects will they not nullify? Why do you talk of our low birth when we have beauty of form and grace of youth? *Hariścandra:* yes, yes. Who will ever bathe in bathroom water because it is not turbid? Who will use for his meal the milk, that a dog gives? Who will wear the flower, that grows in a burial place? Very queer girls you are! Of what use are your pride of youth, beauty of form and smartness of intellect? Oh God! can any one seek your company? The very idea is shocking!

The girls did not own defeat. They continued their argument.
Girls: Oh! you do not see any thing foul in the ear that listens to our song and in the tongue that converses with us. You do not see any thing foul in the eye, that beholds our fair form and in the nose, that smells our sweet odour. Can there be foulness in touch alone? Can it ever happen that among the five senses, four are superior and one inferior?

Hariścandra had his answer ready to his clever argument.
Hariścandra: The eye perceives by seeing. The nose perceives by smelling. The ear perceives by listening. All this they do from a distance; they do not touch the person. What a vile talk! What a bad analogy! A live coal will burn when you touch it. Will it do so when you see, hear and smell it? Get away. Enough of your foul words!'

The girls did not yield even to this argument.

Girls: We came to you in the hope that we of low caste due to curse will be purified in your company, high-born as you are.

Hariścandra: What? shall I spoil my caste for your sake?

Girls: Oh king, can the water of Ganga be ever polluted because it washes away the sins of sinners?

Hariścandra: This is not so in the case of caste. How much of acid is needed to spoil a jar of milk?

With this final argument, the king drove them away with a good beating. This reached the ears of Viśwāmitra. Red in rage he ran to the place, hurled all abuse at Hariścandra and repeated the marriage offer. In the course of the conversation, Hariścandra was irritated by his pressure tactics and made a counter offer 'I may offer you my entire kingdom but never shall I marry these girls' Viswāmitra was just waiting for this word. He at once said, 'All right, either you marry or you abdicate'. Hariścandra ultimately decided to declare that he would abdicate his kingdom but never would he part with his integrity. Immediately Viśwāmitra took the promise from him and praised him for his generous gift. When we examine this episode as it develops, we appreciate how the gift of the kingdom became inevitable on the part of the king. In the story that follows, Rāghavānka has depicted with dignity and restraint the touching scene of abdication, the sorrow and the suffering consequent on it and the courage with which Hariś-candra and his wife Chandramati went through the ordeal.

In this poem, Rāghavānka has mainfested wonderfully his dramatic genius. It is essentially a very powerful drama. Rāghavānka is only next to Ranna in giving to the Kannada world a poem, possessing great sense of drama. We may view it from the point of view of plot-construction, characterisation, sentiment or dialogue and we shall find it a work of high quality in every respect. Of course, it is not free from blemishes. For instance, the change of heart that we notice in Viśwāmitra at the end of the story appears rather sudden, considering how cruel and persistent was his persecution of the king. If his wrath was just a mask as has been suggested, all his poses from the

beginning lose their force and become showy. In the character of Hariścandra also, there are odd trends which do not go well with his unflinching devotion to truth. On the whole, however, *Hariścandra kāvya* is great as a secular work. In it, the poet has outlived his religious zeal and delivered the message of Indian culture that 'God is truth and truth is God' through symbolic narration. The message, which the Mahatma of this century gave to India and the world, Rāghavānka gave about seven hundred years ago as a poet. Truth is not mere truth of speech. It is the divine Law, the very principle of life. He who follows it will have to go through fire and then God is sure to bless him.

In conclusion, it may be said that Rāghavānka has given full vent to his rich power of dramatic narration in *Hariścandra kāvya*—power which had grown with him and found partial expression in his other works.

Nēmi, Janna and Ruḍra

Nēmicandra

Classical poetry was in vogue till about the middle of the 12th century and most of the writers were Jaina by persuasion. After that a socio-religious revolution took place, bringing in its trail a literary revolution as well. *Vacana* literature came to the fore in full swing. Works were written in indigenous metres like *Ragaḷe*, *Ṣatpaḍi* and *Tripaḍi*. The influence of Vīraśaiva thought went on increasing during the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. And yet it did not stem the tide of classical writing. Both the classical and the revolutionary currents flowed together during this period. For instance, it is noteworthy that Nēmicandra and Rudrabhaṭṭa of the old tradition are contemporaries of Harihara and Rāghavānka of the new school. Both the former were scholar poets, who wrote under the patronage of two great ministers of king Vīraballāḷa of Hoysala dynasty. Nēmicandra composed two works in *campu* form viz., *Līlāvaṭi* and *Nēmināthapurāṇa*. *Līlāvaṭi* is a love poem, inspired in its theme by the Sanskrit work, *Vāsavaḍaṭṭā* of Subandhu. The story is a very small peg, on which the poet hangs all manner of description known to conventional poetry. Śringāra according to Nēmicandra is the only sentiment which deserves prominence and that is what characterises *Līlāvāṭi*. But the beauty of the work is marred by the length and the excess of the descriptions, however one might appreciate the power of Nēmicandra as a poet. His other work *Nēmināthapurāṇa* is hagiography in Jaina tradition. It is striking in its treatment of the Krishna story as part of the purāṇa on account of the subtle character sense and the rich poetic fancy. If the characters in Leelāvaṭi are just lifeless dolls, some of the characters in this purāṇa are live and human. *Nēmināthapurāṇa* is called *ardhanēmi* as it is found incomplete but even so it is a powerful creation though it cannot be called a great work of art.

Rudrabhaṭṭa

Rudrabhaṭṭa was a Brahmin poet, brought up in the Vedic tradition. He chose *Viṣnupurāṇa* as the source for his *Jagannāthavijaya*, which is a work of the classical stamp in *campu* form. Earlier, Brahmin poets had written secular and scientific works in Kannada. It was given to Ruḍra to produce a religious and devotional work in the campu style, based on the Kṛṣṇa story as narrated in *Viṣnupurāṇa*. It was not his intention merely to recount the life of Krishna as a story teller. As he has said, he intended to write in such a manner that knowledge of the highest truth would dawn on him when he visualised Lord Kṛṣṇa in his poetic concentration (Kāvyasamāthi). Here we notice his keen desire of seeking knowledge through devotion and meditation. He appears to have realised his high ideal in depicting some of the situations like *Rāsalīlā* but his concentration is not uniformly successful as it is sometimes distracted by stereotyped description and a kind of ingenious display. That is why *Jagannāthavijaya* did not turn out to be as superb a work as it promised to be. One of its commendable features is its liberal outlook. The poet has shown his leanings towards Upanishadic thought and belief in the oneness of God regardless of the name, given to him. Like a true *Bhāgavaṭa*, he made no distinction between Hari and Hara. From the 12th to the 15th century, mediocre poets continued the tradition in a lower key, barring, of course, a few exceptions. The tradition was diversified by Jaina Purāṇas in *campu* form on the one hand and biographies of Vīraśiva saints in Ṣaṭpadi form on the other. Among the Brahmin poets, Choundarasa rendered *Daśakumāracariṭa* (the story of the ten princes) of Danḍi into Kannada and strangely enough made use of this secular work as an outlet for his devotional feelings. This is clear from his own device to send one of the princes to visit Pandharāpura and pay obeisance to God Vitthala.

Janna

Janna was an outstanding poet of the 13th century. Like Pampa he had a versatile personality, being a warrior, minister and poet of distinction. He was honoured by his patron-king with the title of *Kavicakravarṭi* (emperor among poets). His works are mainly two: *Yaṣōḍharacariṭe* and *Ananṭanātha Purāṇa*. The former is a work small in size but great in quality. The story of Yaśodhara is well-known in the Jaina tradition as preaching non-violence and compassion. Janna has handled it with profound insight and subtle imagination. The story in brief is thus: Amritamati, the wife of king Yaśōdhara, was charmed by the music of an elephant tamer at dead of night when she was with her husband. She went mad after him even after knowing that he was one of the ugliest persons going. Janna has narrated this story with an unerring sense of depraved human passion and of the

strange ways of fate. Had it not been for his high aesthetic sensibility and subtle sense of propriety, the poem would have been ordinary propagandist stuff. One or two examples may be given from this work, that go to show its excellence. The royal couple, Yaśōdhara and Amritamati were perfect in beauty and intense in love. One night, when they were asleep, the elephant tamer of the royal household started singing with a very sweet voice for his own recreation. His voice awakened Amritamati and roused her passion. As soon as she heard the song, she offered her all to the singer without caring to find out who it was. Next morning she sent her lady companion to identify the person. The companion came to know who it was and coming back, spoke to Amritamati in an ironical vein, 'Oh tender one, I wonder how you chose to lavish your love on such a creature who resembles Cupid. There is none on earth, who can be likened to him!' Not seeing through the irony in her speech, Amritamati jumped with joy, saying 'Tell me further. Is my lover so beautiful? You are killing me by your delay'. Then the companion had to describe how utterly ugly he was in every respect. Instead of being repelled by all that, Amritamati said with visible emotion, 'You silly one, does anyone reject *Kastūri* (musk) because it is black, *candana* (sandal-wood) because it is twisted and the rainbow because it is bent? Ugliness is best in those, whom we love. When we love, do we worry about outward form? He is my Cupid, Indra, Caṇḍra, all-in-all!' Janna has here shown the intensity and the depth of her depraved love. Apart from being unmindful about the lover's form which may be explained in blind attraction, she has suddenly come to conclude that it is best for a lover to be ugly.

As days rolled on, the queen became so fond of that ugly creature that she came to dislike her husband just as a crow might feel a distaste for the mango fruit after tasting the neem fruit. The king was puzzled by the mysterious change in her attitude. One night, he feigned sleep in order to find out the real cause. Amritamati slipped away from his arms and ran to her paramour. The king followed her quietly with a sword in hand. The tamer, enraged by her delay, kicked off all the articles of worship she had brought with her and catching her by the hair, beat her mercilessly. She rolled at his feet and said, 'Pray, don't be angry. That wretched king detained me too long. All about you is so sweet to me—your voice and your form. I am sure to die if you desert me. All other men are like brothers to me'. As king Yaśōdhara, standing incognito listened to her words, his sword leapt up, his arm stretched out and his mind was upset with fury. He darted forth to make short work of both of them. But patience held him back. He said to himself, 'My sword is meant to kill hostile kings and not such worms. A lion kills an elephant and not a jackal. Besides, can we root out evil desire by smiting a person? If woman goes astray, real triumph lies in ignoring it with sheer contempt'. With these words, the king restrained himself and returned to his chamber.

Janna has exhibited the very essence of his art within the small compass of these two situations. He has not only depicted the tragedy of illicit love with the sure touch of a great artist but has also declared the triumph of non-violence and restraint. Following in the footsteps of Pampa, he has tried to hold the balance even between ethical and aesthetic values. The basis of this tragic tale is the blind love of Amritamati for an ugly person. It is possible to ask whether her love and devotion towards her husband was so weak as to tempt her to fall a prey to immoral attraction. We can, however, find an answer to this question if we understand the psychological approach of the poet. Love or sex craving is an irresistible force, which invades the heart with marvellous speed. When it is assisted by misfortune, it can work havoc. Amritamati became as helpless as a dry leaf caught in the whirlwind of the twin forces of illicit love and bad luck. After this, her illicit desire itself turned out to be her supporting logic. We get a clue to this interpretation in the meaningful observation of Janna to the effect that the *māyā* of Cupid, aided by irony of fate will undo human life. Though a small work, *Yaśōḍharacarita* is great writing in its crucial portions on account of the subtle delineation of character and rich power of fancy and diction.

The other work of Janna is *Ananṭanāthapurāna*, a work in *campu* on the 14th Tirthankara in Jaina legend. This poem has grown in bulk as a result of lengthy description and elaboration of Jaina doctrine. The episode of candaṣāsana, which forms part of this work, is something like a counterpart of the Amritamati episode in *Yaṣoḍharacariṭa*. It may be compared to a beautiful valley in a vast forest. The gist of the story is that Chandaśāsana visited his friend Vasuśēṇa as a guest, got enamoured of his bewitching wife and snatched her away through deception. He employed several devices to entice her but failed to win her love. At last, with the help of a magician he showed her husband's head, cut off from the body. This ghastly sight killed her. He died embracing her dead body. This episode deals with the tragedy of illicit love on the part of man whereas that of Amritamati deals with the same kind of love on the part of woman. Janna has made some of his original contribution to Kannada poetry by his subtle handling of an aspect of unconventional love.

Āndayya

Āndayya is the only poet of this period who showed his individuality in respect of theme, story structure and style. His single work called *Kabbigara Kāva* is neither entirely religious nor secular in content. It is a kind of extravaganza with *Kāma* or Cupid as the hero, accompanied by his typical retinue and army. The theme is novel and striking. Kāma went to war against god Śiva because Śiva did not return the moon whom he had stolen. Kāma defeats him in battle and converts him into half-woman. As a result of the counter-curse by Śiva, he remains incognito for some time to come. There

is no single source for this theme. It is a product of the poet's creative fancy inspired by fragments of myth in the Jaina and Vedic traditions. It seems that the kidnapping of the moon as the cause of conflict between *Kāma* and Śiva is an original idea, new perhaps in the whole range of Indian literature. The uniqueness of the work lies in its style, which is pure Kannada without any admixture of Sanskrit words. Though, of course, Sanskrit words have crept into the work in the form of *taḍbhavas*, their percentage is comparatively much less. One must admire the poet for the courage and competence with which he has built up the story in his own inimitable style. What is more admirable is the fact that the work runs smooth as a good composition and does not sound like a *tour de force*.

Chapter VI

THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD—2

KANNADA literature became more popular, rich and varied during the medieval period ranging from the 15th to the 17th century. Classical poetry, which had dominated the scene from early times up to the middle of the 12th century, co-existed until the 15th century with vacana and other forms of literature; but its influence was on the decrease. It receded completely into the background for more than 200 years from 15th century onwards. Popular literature which was easier to understand and which could be sung or recited, ruled the roost. There was plenty of writing in metres like *ṣaṭpadi* and *sāngaṭya* in addition to a host of devotional songs. The *campu* form fell into disuse. Poetry became more and more wide in its appeal. During this time, Karnāṭaka was integrated politically and culturally with the rest of South India and had reached the zenith of glory. The Vijayanagar Empire, which was founded in the 14th century, had grown into an impregnable fortress of power though it had been slightly weakened by hostile forces outside and inside during the 15th and 16th centuries. Bukkarāya, Praudhadēvarāya, Kṛṣṇaḍēvarāya and Rāmarāya, who were as good statesmen as warriors, strove to raise the prestige of the Empire. In particular, Kṛṣṇaḍēvarāya, who ruled in the first fifties of the 16th century, is acclaimed as one of the best monarchs of India. The Empire seemed like a thrilling dream come to reality with a capital, wealth, army and means of enjoyment. It dazzled the eyes of foreign merchants and travellers, who have waxed eloquent on its glory. Unfortunately, this dream burst like a bubble in the battle of Rakkasaṭangadagi by a slight prick as it were.

From the 15th century onwards, life in Karnāṭaka manifested both the extremes, supreme strength as well as extreme weakness. If we bear this in mind, we shall understand the proper background of the literary activity and discover how far it is reflected in the works of this period. From the vast material which we have at our disposal, we learn about the valour, the religious catholicity and the taste for art of the kings and the people in the Vijayanagar Empire. We also notice some of their defects like conservatism, blind hero-worship, disunity and sensuality. Life in Vijayanagar thus showed up a curious mixture of good and bad traits. When the good qualities were uppermost, the Empire and Kannada culture which it represented reached their high watermark. When the bad trends got the upper hand, both these went down to the lowest depth. In its best manifestation, Vijayanagara

proved to be a great unifying force for all the languages, religions and sects of the South. It supported Vedic religion and helped the propagation of Vedic literature, which was an event of all-India importance. Vidyāraṇya, the great sage, was the guiding spirit behind this huge effort. Later on, several other religious leaders gave it the necessary stimulus from time to time. The broad, synthetic outlook of the Kannadigas was very much in evidence. An example of historical veracity is well worth mention here. In 1388 A.D. conflict arose between two religious groups viz., Jaina and Śrivaiṣnava. King Bukkarāya took the right step in calling to a conference leaders of both the groups; and joining their hands, brought about an understanding with the words: 'There is no difference between the two faiths. Both are the same (in essence). Whatever is loss or gain to one community will be loss or gain to another'. The inscription, which has recorded this understanding, is a memorable document of lasting value. It does not simply enunciate the policy of the king. It is a declaration of a way of life, characteristic of Kannada culture at its best. The aphorism of Basavaṇṇa to the effect 'God is one. His names are many' appears to have acquired significance in the life and thought of the people, as is evident from the well-known inscriptional stanza in Sanskrit meaning, 'May god Kēśava whom Śaivas worship as Śiva, Vedantins as Brahma, Jainas as Arhat, the Bauḍḍhas as Buḍḍha, Naiyayikas as Kartā, protect us'.

A peculiar feature of this age is that diverse literature with a popular appeal, pertaining to all the faiths current then, was produced numerously. Vīraśaiva literature was waiting for a revival long after the revolution initiated by Basaveśwara. Under the patronage of Vijayanagar rulers and with the active interest and cooperation of Vīraśaiva scholars and mystics, it expanded in several directions and justified the revival. Jaina literature shed its old trappings and went ahead with compositions in simple metrical forms. Brahmin literature especially that of devotion came out profusely. Brahmin writers gave up their hesitant attitude, strengthened their faith in Kannada and started writing in popular strains. Kumāravyāsa as the pioneer and spear-head of the new consciousness showed his marvellous grip over popular idiom in his rendering of the *Mahābhāraṭa* story. Many poets of the devotional school of thought came forward to render into Kannada the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhāraṭa*, the *Bhāgavaṭa* and such other works under the direct or indirect influence of Kumāravyāsa. They used popular metrical forms like *ṣaṭpadi* and *sāngaṭya* freely; they sang songs known as *kīrṭanas*. Though it is obvious that religion or sect exercised its influence on the writers of this age in respect of choice of subject and manner of presentation, it must be remembered that we have also evidence of a broad outlook that transcended religious bias or tried to reconcile different view-points. It is necessary to be constantly aware of this fact when we assess a poet's work under a religious label.

Kumāravyāsa

Kumāravyāsa is one of the top-ranking poets of this age. In fact, he is one of the few poets, who stand in the forefront of Kannada poetry. His real name was Nāraṇappa, belonging to Kōliwāḍa, a village in Dharwar district. He was a great devotee of God Vīra Nārāyaṇa of Gadag. He calls himself a 'yōgīndra', an eminent *yōgi*. From what we know about him, he was a gifted poet with a facile pen. He was one of the most liberal-minded poets of the age, being *Bhāgavaṭa* by temperament and conviction. He has brought out the sentiments of the heroic and the devotional with equal ease.

Kannada Bhāraṭa is his Magnum Opus with 150 sandhis and nearly 8,500 verses in *bhāmini Ṣaṭpadi* metre. It contains the *Mahābhāraṭa* story from the very beginning upto the end of ten *parvas*. Though it deals mainly with the internecine conflict between Pāndavas and Kauravas, it focuses attention on Kṛṣṇa as he symbolises the Supreme Lord, who is the unseen wirepuller in the puppet show of human life. That is why the poet has called it *Kṛṣṇa Kathā*, the story of Kṛṣṇa. It may seem strange but it is true that Kṛṣṇa occupies the centre of the stage in this poem. In other words, God is the hero, playing a vital role in this cosmic drama. This work is an outcome of the fusion of two visions-one of structural beauty and the other of God-centred life. Its singular charm lies in high-lighting the play of the Divine in human affairs even while depicting the complex nature of human passion. It is clear that Kumāravyāsa was fully conversant with the story and one with the spirit of the *Mahābhāraṭa*, in which he was steeped by constant reading and cogitation. He might have, as well, reached the higher levels of consciousness and invoked the grace of the Almighty by his yogic power. He might have also mastered the necessary tools of expression by vast learning and practice. This masterpiece is thus a culmination of all his powers. That it is a masterpiece is the uniform view of all discerning students of Kannada poetry. When we analyse this view, we observe that due credit is given to Kumāravyāsa for producing a certain version of the well-known story, that was permeated by his life-vision and enlivened by his rich imagination. The broad outline of the *Mahābhāraṭa* story as told by Vyāsa remained the same though a few alterations and omissions were there. Even so, the *Bhāraṭa* of Kumāravyāsa is on the whole a re-creation of the original, not just a replica. Its originality does not consist so much in its departure from the original in story content or character conception. It consists mainly in a highly imaginative rendering of the story and its interpretation through a clear life-vision as also in the masterly use of living Kannada idiom.

One or two examples may be cited from the work. The last scene in the life of king Pāndu is a touching portion of *Āḍiparva*. In depicting this scene, Kumāravyāsa has taken the original as it is but has rendered it effectively so as to bring out its poignance. The spring

season has set in, appearing like an uplifted sword to the *yōgi* and a sharp spear to the *viyōgi* (One who is away from his beloved). This description acquires special meaning when we remember that king Pāṇḍu was forced to remain away from his wife as a result of the curse of a sage. We are further told that this spring, the king of seasons, launched his attack on Pāṇḍu. Pāṇḍu's wife, Mādri, was moving about in the forest fully bedecked with flowers. Pāṇḍu saw her and was ravished by her beauty. The shaft of Cupid got stuck in his heart. Cupid deprived him of his discretion as if every hair in his body was pierced with his myraid arrows, not only by five. Pāṇḍu lost all his sense of restraint. The ocean of his wisdom suddenly came upto the knee. He ran to his wife and pulled the fringe of her garment. She fell at his feet with cries of 'Nay, Nay'. He did not listen to her in the madness of his passion and embraced her to death. Kumāravyāsa has narrated the tragic story of king Pāṇḍu with skill and understanding. It has a universal significance as it suggests the helplessness of even wise men before the onslaughts of passion. It also foreshadows what a raw deal Pāṇḍavas, the children of Pāṇḍu, will get at the hands of destiny in future.

The *Ḍyūṭaparva* as a part of *Sabhāparva*, especially the situation in which Draupadi is insulted, is one of the most powerful portions in Kumāravyāsa's *Bhāraṭa*. When Draupadi is lost to the Pāndavas in the deceptive game of dice, Duśyāsana drags her to the court, abusing her in unseemly and brusque language to the great consternation of the assembly. Bhīma and Arjuna are so terribly put out that 'they boiled in their mind the entrails of that wretched Kaurava in gushing blood'. How tellingly does this bring out the highest degree of their suppressed wrath! Yudhiṣhthira tries to curb the rising tempo of their indignation by a sign of the brow. But he can not resist Bhīma's fury, which ignited with great force, the moment Draupadi is insulted further by Duryōdhana. His violent outbrusts make every one present shudder with fear and alarm. Draupadi, however, laughs heartily, tossing about her loosened braids of hair, because she has heard the manly voice of indignation and retaliation. Bhīma girds up his loins to finish his foes at one stroke and takes the oath that he would drench her hair in the blood of Duśyāsana and comb it with the comb of his teeth. Terrible oath indeed! Thus one can see how the poet has excelled in depicting the tense scene. The real power behind such creative utterance is the heroic personality of Kumāravyāsa, who would protest and rise up against untruth and injustice.

Virātaparva has afforded another excellent opportunity to Kumāravyāsa to show his unerring sense of character. In this *parva*, Bhīma rescues Draupadi from the amorous clutches of Kīcaka while she is disguised as Sairandhri in the incognito stay of the Pāṇḍavas in the court of king Virāṭa. In this *parva* again, Uttarakumāra, the Virāṭa prince, brags of his bravery in the presence of the ladies of his harem but runs away from the battlefield like a coward, giving rise to a good deal

of sarcastic humour. Uttarakumāra is one of the immortal creations of Kumāravyāsa as a pseudo-heroic prince.

To sum up, the greatness of Kumāravyāsa lies in his individual vision and in his mode of presenting the *Mahābhārata* story in racy Kannada idiom. If we analyse the source of his power and the nature of his creation, we perceive that he held as it were the mirror of his mature mind to the *Mahābhārata* panorama—the mirror, which he had rendered transparent and shining by austere penance.

Thus he had absorbed the very essence of the vast and varied story and recreated it in his typical manner. His work is in every sense a genuinely Kannada version of the *Mahābharata*. It is original because of its own manner of rendering the theme and not original because it has not generally departed from the well-known epic story. Its excellence and its charm consist in the creative act of the poet in bringing to light the epic story from the cavern of the past and enlivening it with the highest tools of poetic expression. The narration is at times loose and ordinary; moralising is lengthy and diffuse. All the same, it is one of greatest creations in the Kannada language on account of its intensity of vision, richness of imagery and raciness of idiom—above all, its marvellous identification with the original theme.

Cāmarasa

Harihara was the first poet in Kannada, who wrote poetic biographies of devotees of Śiva. As we have already shown, he struck a new path in respect of theme, metre and style by writing in *ragaḷe* form the biographies of Basavēṣwara and others, who led the Veeraśaiva revolt. He scaled new heights in the realms of poetry. His disciple, Rāghavānka wrote one or two works of a similar nature. We come across several such biographies in this period. Among them, *Prabhulingalīle* of Cāmarasa, which is a biography of Allamaprabhu, is easily the most outstanding work. We know very little about the life of Cāmarasa. It is difficult to believe the stories in vogue, indicating family relationship between him and Kumāravyāsa. He was included in the hundred and one *virakatas* or recluses, who lived at the time of king Prauḍhadēvarāya of Vijayanagara. Judging from his work, we are led to believe that he must have cultivated a sense of detachment and an independent outlook necessary for a perceptive depiction of the very core of Allamaprabhu's personality. It was Harihara, who produced a biography of Allamaprabhu for the first time. His version of the biography differs from that of Cāmarasa both in respect of story content and sequence of events. For instance, the Allama of Harihara falls into the meshes of Kāmalatā, suffers in separation and repents in renunciation whereas the Allama of Cāmarasa allures Māyā but eludes her grasp as a perfect recluse. The *ragaḷe* form of Harihara moves with the high speed of a torrent whereas the 'Leele' of Cāmarasa flows evenly like a full river. On his own admission, Cāmarasa appears to have followed a certain extant tradition concerning Allama's

biography. Whatever that may be, it is patent that he intended to portray Allama as a perfect soul and not as developing character. As the title of the work suggests, he wanted to describe the *leelā* or sport of the Lord in the form of Allama. He was aware of the sublime nature of his theme and was full of genuine humility, considering himself just an instrument of the Divine. He compared his voice to an echo within a temple, produced by an original sound but creating an illusion that the temple itself was vocal.

Cāmarasa concentrates his powers on the depiction of Allama's personality. Therein lies his greatness. He has used all the episodes about him towards the fulfilment of his principal aim and has not fallen a prey to any other temptation. His creative act has thus been natural and satisfying. While introducing this hero to us at the outset, he says, 'Allama is never lured by mere words; he presents himself to persons in the forms they like and at the level they understand. In fact he is God incarnate'. If Cāmarasa had taken a fancy just to describe a host of miracles for popular consumption, his work would have suffered in quality.

Let us now see how the extraordinary character of Allama is depicted through certain episodes and utterances. As the story goes, Māyā was born as the daughter of *Mamakāra*, the king of Banavase and Mohini the queen. A paragon of beauty as she was, she grew up into a bewiching damsel. Once she saw handsome Allama in the guise of a drummer at the entrance of a temple and fell in love with him. When her mates conveyed her desire to him, he seemed to agree after a good deal of persuasion. He was taken to a decorated chamber. But disillusionment was in store for Māyā at the happiest moment of her life. How can day and night live together? Will the sky be drenched by rain? Will it bend by wind or burn by fire? Allama was that kind of 'skyey' man ('Bayaluga' as the poet puts it). Details of this episode apart, Cāmarasa has depicted with consummate art the seeming involvement and the inner detachment of Allama. In another episode, Māyā was dancing and Allama was drumming. There could be no happier combination. Allama was playing on the drum to the rhythm of the dance as if he was demonstrating how he was swaying Dame Māyā, who swayed the universe of her creation. It seemed to all appearances that he was enamoured of her. But it only seemed so. Cāmarasa has given a wonderful simile to describe this situation. When a creeper by the side of a marble stone catches fire (wild fire at that), the flames of that fire reflect in that stone and create the delusion that the stone is on fire. In the same way, the fire of passion which engulfed Māyā reflected in Allama, making it appear that he was stung by passion himself. This image, throwing a sudden flood of light on the very core of Allama, who lived in the world of *Māyā* but was never of it, is a marvellous stroke of poetic genius. This is an outstanding testimony among others to the greatness of Cāmarasa's work.

In the portions that follow, we are told how other great personalities like Basavēśwara and Akkamahādevi came in contact with Allama and

received inspiration and guidance from him. There is an interesting episode, which shows the radical approach of Allama in matters of religion. During his travels in the Kannada country, he came to Sonnalāpura (the present Sholapur) and saw a number of people, engaged in building a temple. He learnt that yogi Siddharāma had asked his disciples to build it. He said with surprise, 'Did Siddharāma, who gave up the lure of the mundane world, get entangled in fondness for fame as a recluse, as one might cut asunder shackles of yarn only to put on shackles of gold'. This taunt, which was derogatory to their Master, enraged the disciples and provoked a scuffle. They tried to tie Allama hand and foot but could not succeed. They pelted stones at him but Allama stood unhurt on the heap of stones. They complained to their Master. He came, spitting fire. On seeing him, Allama said, 'Siddharāma has become more famous than a man of the world. Oh! what a strange thing for a yogi to be so furious!' Then ensued a warfare of words. Siddharāma tried to burn the whole world with his eye in the forehead. Allama put out that fire in a moment. At last Siddharāma repented, realised his folly and fell at the feet of Allama. Allama advised him to keep away from the petty desires of the outer mind, having realised the glory of the inner spirit.

Cāmarasa has thus brought out the salient traits of Allama in a brilliant and spontaneous manner. Of course, there is a little more of idealisation and some sectarian obsession in the work. But he has not overstepped the limit to the extent of doing harm to the core of the character. One is struck by the poet's rich imagination and apt expression. His identification with Allama and the consequent grasp of that personality must have spurred his imagination to soar high and helped him to express with effortless ease. His style is simple and racy, though the theme is profound. It appears as though neat, little words in pure Kannada flaunt as young horse for his fancy to have a joy ride on.

Cāmarasa is a poet of original genius like Harihara and Kumāravyāsa. His *Prabhulingalīle* is only next to *Basavarājadēvara ragaḷe* of Harihara as a poetic biography of high quality. In Harihara, there is a torrent of emotion whereas in Cāmarasa, there is an ocean of wisdom. Other Vīraśaiva poets of this period carried forward the tradition of writing poetic biographies of great saints of the past and the present. Poets of other faiths wrote about legendary heroes under the guise of biography. It is true that the Vīraśaiva biographies also are often encrusted with myth and miracle but there is no reason to doubt the historical veracity of the central character and the main facts of his life. In the long list of such works, special mention must be made of *Basavapurāṇa* of Bhīma and *Cannabasavapurāṇa* of Virūpākṣapaṇḍita. The latter is a voluminous work, which does not confine itself to biography but has spread its net wide, dealing with varied topics such as the '*līla*'s of God śiva, Vīraśaiva doctrine and code of conduct. A biography thus developed into an encyclopaedia for followers of the Vīraśaiva faith. It also found scope for all the conventions, peculiar

to classical poetry. It is a characteristic achievement inasmuch as it succeeded in weaving a varied and vast fabric round about a biography but on the creative plane it is different from the concentrated effort of Harihara and Cāmarasa.

Nijaguṇi and Sarvajña

During this period, Vīraśaiva literature saw resurgence on a large scale. Consequently it took many forms such as edited collection of early vacanas, commentaries on the same, new vacanas, biographies and philosophical works. *Ṣaṭpadi*, the six-lined popular metre, established itself as the main prosodic vehicle of writing in this period, though other indigenous metres like *tripaḍi* and *sāngaṭya* were occasionally used. *Campu* form was very rarely used.

The *vacana* literature of the 12th century, about which we have spoken earlier, was arranged and compiled according to a certain pattern in keeping with the Vīraśaiva doctrine. As mentioned earlier, there were a hundred and one *viraktas* or hermits, who lived at the time of Prauḍhadēvarāya. They are mainly credited with this literary work. One of the significant features in the Vīraśaiva revival was the collation and dramatic presentation of select *vacanas* in works like *Śūnyasampāḍane*. The central character in each episode of this work is Allamaprabhu, under whose spiritual guidance discussions used to take place in the past in the assembly hall called *Anubhavamantapa*. The *Śūnyasampāḍane* of Gūḷūru Siddhavīraṇācārya is considered one of the best in the line. It has served more than one purpose. It has revived the past with a sense of drama. It has brought out the salient traits of the great saints of the time. It has focused attention on Allama as the greatest personality of that age. It has above all imbibed the essence of spiritual democracy, in which every man and woman has the right to participation with freedom to doubt and challenge even the highest seeker of knowledge. This work has been compared to Plato's dialogues though of course it has a stamp of its own.

The *vacana* form of writing, with which Kannada literature was flooded in the middle of the 12th century, did not revive with that kind of upsurge at any time later. However, a few vacanakāras experimented with the form in this period. They naturally reveal the influence of earlier saints like Basavēswara. In some of them, the glow of personality is evident but the poetic rendering of spiritual experience is not of a high order. Tontada Siddheśwara of Edeyur was a great saint who built up a new centre of Veeraṣaiva thought and blazed the trail for his disciples to follow. His work called *Ṣaṭsṭhalagnāna sārāmriṭa* contains nearly 700 vachanas of mystical and philosophic content. Among his disciples, Swatantra Siddhalingēśwara and Ghanalinga continued the tradition of the master creditably. Ghanalinga, in particular, displays great emotive and imaginative power, though the lyrical content of his writing is often diluted by what may be called learned obscurity. His *vacanas* tend to be lengthy and lose the beauty

of greatness in succintness, which characterised the vacanas of the 12th century.

Nijaguṇa Śivayōgi

During this period, Kannada literature became more and more people-oriented so that even the highest philosophy was communicated in the simplest possible language through prose, poetry and song. One of the remarkable persons, who contributed richly to this kind of writing, was Nijaguṇaśivayōgi or Nijaguṇi. It is said that he was a ruler, who renounced power, practised penance on the hill called Ṣambhulinga and became a 'jñāni'. In five of his works, which have come down to us, he has described his experiences and thoughts through popular metrical forms like *tripaḍi*, *sāngaṭya* and song. He has preached a broad-based philosophy and tried to bring about a synthesis between Vīraśaiva doctrine on the one hand and the philosophy of the Ātman, as contained in the Veḍas and Upanishads on the other. His utterances are simple, direct and telling. In the remaining two works of his, *Vivēkachintāmani* is a comprehensive encyclopaedia of knowledge in prose. In the ten chapters of this tome, containing 765 topics, extant information on philosophic, geographical and literary subjects has been furnished in precise detail. It may be hailed as a precursor to what we in modern times call a book of general knowledge, a real encyclopaedia. On the whole, Nijaguṇi was one of the wisest men that medieval Karnaṭak produced. His influence has been deep and abiding in the religious life of Karnāṭaka. Even today there are some institutions and persons, devoted to his school of thought. Song as a form which was used at the time of Basavēśwara, was revived by Nijaguṇi and kept up by other Vīraśaiva mystics. Prominent among them was Muppina Ṣhadakṣhari, a contemporary of Nijaguṇi. His songs ring with intense devotion and voice forth the cry of an aspiring soul. The catholicity of his outlook is noteworthy. In a prayer song to the Lord, he affirms that there is only one god, according to all scriptures and that He appears to all according to their vision. In another song, he compares himself to a maiden, longing to go back to her parents' home. He works out this imagery to great effect. Sarpabhūṣaṇa Śivayōgi was another mystic of a later period, known for the same breadth of outlook and maturity of inner experience. In his invocatory song to the Lord, he describes him as one who is beyond name and form of the three gods (the trinity of Brahma, Viṣhnu and Ṣiva). The other gods like Indra are but his portions, the sun and the moon and other luminous bodies are but particles of his lustre. A number of saints have shown this essential understanding of godhead in the last century or so. Special mention may be made of Sherif Saheb of Ṣisuvināl, who was Muslim by birth, whose guru was a Brahmin and whose associates were Veeraṣaivas. He has written symbolic, mystical songs in the spoken Kannada of North Karnāṭaka.

Sarvajña

Sarvajña is a name to conjure with in the history of Kannada literature. The broad outlook, which permeated the philosophy of Nijaguṇi, widened further in Sarvajña. His life and his utterances are part of the imperishable treasure in the cultural history of Karnāṭaka, of which a Kannadiga can be justly proud. He held the mirror to the life of the people and represented their hopes and aspirations. His sayings, replete with common sense and wisdom, danced on the lips of the common people and served as their beacon light. In fact, many of them have enriched the Kannada language as proverbs and epigrams. Not much is known about his life. One can only guess from such internal evidence as we have that his early life was not happy as he probably fell out with his parents and left home to wander from place to place in search of truth. Luckily for him, he must have met a guru, who fostered him like a mother and set him on the right path. He became a citizen of the world as he says 'with all people as his kinsmen and relations in every street and the entire earth his family deity'. All the bitterness of early life fled from him. No trace of self-interest remained with him. He could grasp truth and speak it without fear or favour. He became a fearless and unbiassed champion of truth. He adhered to no particular sect or religion. He tells us that experience was his Vēda and life was his school. Sarvajña, which means the 'all-knowing', might have been the pet name, with which people called him. He himself says, 'Did Sarvajña become so out of ego? No, he learnt words of wisdom from everybody and thus became a mountain of wisdom'. Varied experience of the world, garnered from all possible sources, mature understanding and judgement, breadth of vision-it is these things which made Sarvajña what he was. He was not a great scholar nor a philosopher as such. But the wisdom of the ages as reflected in Indian culture and the culture of Karnāṭaka had permeated his being and found spontaneous expression in the form of pithy sayings.

Whatever the theme on which he dwells, he speaks the very essence of truth. About God he says, 'Can there be two gods for this world? There is only one God, who is the maker and the divine source of all'. About guru, he declares 'What matters who shows the way to the town that we want to go to? What matters whoever is the person, who reveals the very essence of truth?' The conventional ideas about devotion and worship of God are well-known. People stick to external forms without trying to know their inner meaning. Sarvajña has always struck the right note and taught the true way in all such matters. 'If you meditate in your mind, it is of no moment whether you do it in your house or in the temple. What is the use of a person who does not meditate in his mind and is found in the very heart of the temple? The body is the temple and the soul is the divine idol. He, who worships him within himself, is sure to be liberated'. He repeats off and on the tenets of universal religion and ethics. He values charity

as much as truth. No one has said as beautifully as Sarvajña about the supreme importance of giving. 'What is the difference between him that gives and him that creates? He who gives with his own hand is God himself. One ought to offer food to the needy, speak the truth and look upon others as himself. That paves the way for heaven. Whatever we give comes back to us, while whatever we hide goes to others. Don't say that what you give is wasted. In fact it is food in store for your future'.

Sarvajña did not lose interest in worldly life because he was a recluse. He loved life all the more because he was disinterested. To a householder, he has given a sound piece of advice in many of his sayings such as 'If you have a warm house and money to spend and above all a wife who knows your mind, you can set fire to heaven and refuse to long for it'. He has described the different kinds of food, used in different parts of Karnataka and relished their flavour. He likes a lover of beauty and art. He says, 'The words of an aesthete (*Rasika*) are as delightful as moon-rise whereas the words of one, who is not an aesthete are as painful as the thrust of a sharp sword'. It is very well-known that Sarvajña was a severe critic of social defects and a terrible satirist at that. But his criticism was free from the poison of hatred or prejudice. It was prompted by real love and keen desire to make life better. He says, 'What is the good of going round and round a temple without a sincere mind? It will be like a bullock turning round and round in oil crushing. All those who pile stone on stone to erect a temple and put a stone image upon another stone, they themselves are like stone! The fingers are counting the beads and the tongue is humming the name while the mind is away, thinking of other things. This is as futile as the barking of a dog in a deserted town. When a liar, facing a temple, raises his hands to his forehead and bows to the deity, you may take it that his lies will be as "long" as his raised hands'. Several examples can be given to show Sarvajña's penetrating analysis of social evils, satirical power and outspoken nature. His sayings are called *vacanas* written in three-lined *tripaḍi*, which is the most ancient and indigenous metrical form in Kannada poetry. He has proved to be a master in the use of this form as no one else has been. In short, he is to Kannada what Tiruvaḷḷuvar of Kuraḷ is to Tamil and Vēmana is to Telugu.

Purandaradāsa and Kanakadāsa

Devotional literature of Hariḍāsas, i.e., servants of God was pioneered by Naraharitīrtha towards the close of the 13th century and developed further by Śripādarāya of the 15th century. Both of them were great scholars and devotees in the pontifical order of Maḍhvāchārya. It reached its high watermark in the 16th century during the reign of Kṛṣṇadēvarāya of Vijayanagara when Purandaradāsa and Kanakadāsa, led by their Guru Vyāsarāya, composed a large number of devotional songs and popularised them by going from house

to house with the haunting tunes on their lips. In the later period, the Haridāsa tradition known as Dāsakūṭa was carried forward by great saints like Vijayadāsa and Jagannāthadāsa. Though it cannot be said that the poetic quality of these songs is uniformly high, one cannot gainsay their earnestness and their spontaneity. As in the *vacana* literature of Veeraṣaiva saints, so also in the *kīrtana* literature of the Vaiṣṇava saints, the *raison d'etre* is a flowering of personality as a devotee of God. Such literature can never be produced by mere erudition or by sheer imagination.

Vyāsarāya, who led this movement, was known as a very learned scholar and a disciple of Śrīpādarāya. He became the head of Vyāsarāyamaṭha. What is most striking is that he was respected by the king and the people alike in the heyday of Vijayanagar Empire. Though he was a Sanskritist, he composed devotional songs in Kannada and encouraged his disciples to follow suit. These songs were sung in the holy presence of the Lord, thus giving rise to the institution of *Dāsakūṭa*. This was a revolutionary step indeed, considering the orthodoxy that reigned supreme in Vedic circles at that time. Vyāsarāya must be remembered with gratitude for his unique contribution to Kannada literature in this field.

Purandaradāsa

Purandaradāsa is acclaimed as one of the greatest among Haridāsas both as a great devotee and a musical composer. His life is shrouded in mystery but it has been shown from available sources that he was a greedy and miserly millionaire and that he renounced his wealth when he felt repentance in some trying situation. He then went over to Vijayanagar with his family and became a disciple of Vyāsarāya. From his songs, we can infer that he was a widely travelled person, he mixed with all sections of society and spread the message of Bhaktimārga. About a thousand of his songs, which have come down to us, deal with such topics as the significance of God's name, the value of inner experience and the *līlās* of god Kṛṣṇa. There is in them criticism of contemporary society, admonition and advice. The one unifying factor in the varied topics is the sincere response of a surrendered soul to outer and inner life-experience. Sometimes in this kind of response, what is said becomes more important than how it is said. This mainly applies to songs in praise of God, which often contain a string of names or a list of deeds, rendered musically. At times, the song starts off with a beautiful refrain but does not sustain it in the stanzas, that follow. The soul of Purandaradāsa's poetry is in the poetry of the soul, the outpouring of the heart. The longings and the appeals, the failings and the foibles, the joy and the elation of a true devotee have found adequate expression in it. Some of them rise to great height. They reflect the aspiration and the agony of a striving and suffering soul as much as the joy of surrender, the courage of conviction and the rapture of self-realisation. They appear like solitary stars when taken separately but viewed as a whole, they assume the

magnitude and the magnificence of sublime self-expression like a sky, studded with countless stars. We may illustrate the strength of spirit which they breathe forth from one of the songs of Purandaradāsa which runs as follows: 'When I meditate on you, O Lord, what harm can others do to me? What can they achieve by their jealousy when I am surrounded by your boundless mercy and when I repeat your name constantly? Do ants lay seige upon fire? Will the dust, that a scampering horse throws up, envelop the sun? Is there anything that can go against one who has patience? Will the mountain tremble when the wind blows? If a thief tries to break open and seize the money which he sees in a mirror, can he get hold of it?' There are a number of such songs, which reflect his strength like a limpid stream and manifest the greatness of his personality and the power of his writing. Quite a number of his songs testify to his social awareness. He has given a picture of society as he saw, its pseudo-religious form and its hypocrisy. Though he has described the ephemeral nature of life on earth and preached detachment, he has asked people to take deep interest in it and live a good life. It is the spirit of renunciation and sense of detachment which will help one to reject the superficial values and adhere to the eternal verities. His song on *Udaravairagya* meaning renunciation which is shown off for the sake of livelihood contains one of his trenchant attacks on religious hypocrisy. He says, 'This is nothing but showy renunciation. These people have not a jot of devotion towards our Lord. They get up at dawn and tremble terribly to show to others that they have had their bath and make them wonder-struck, with all the ego, jealousy, and anger full to the brim within. They gather all the vessels of shining brass and copper as if it is a brassware shop and light many lamps before them so that they glitter. This is the kind of deceitful worship that they offer. With the rosary beads in their hand and mantra in their mouth, they put on a veil of cloth and contemplate not God but woman'. This is the strain in which this song has mounted its most effective attack. By the aptness of its imagery and happiness of its diction, it stands out as a perfect poem of social satire.

Perhaps a larger number of songs are directed to admonition and advice, to the rousing of religious and social consciousness. Purandaradāsa gave the message of *karmayōga* and inspired people to love life and live on a high plane in songs enjoining 'We must swim across' and 'Human life is a great thing, don't lay it waste'. He stressed the significance of dharma as the conquering force in the song meaning 'That *dharma* is victory is the real mantra. Know its secret and act up to it. Feed with sumptuous food the person, who gives you poison. Nourish the man who is jealous of you. Praise him who invades your house. Name your son after the man who strikes you with the sword'. Many of his sayings, like 'Be as firm as a rock in the raging river of life but be as bent as a bow in the presence of the wise' have become proverbial in the Kannadiga's stock of speech and have put him on the throne of his heart for all time to come.

It is well-known that Purandaradāsa was a follower of Maḍhwa and a close disciple of Vyāsarāya. It cannot be denied that he had full and firm faith in the tenets of Maḍhwa. But his was a living faith, combined as it was with a zeal to put those tenets into practice. It was, therefore, having a flexibility and breadth of outlook which is evident in some of his songs. He illuminated the literature of devotion under the able leadership of Vyāsarāya and became the first illustrious member of the *Dāsakūṭa.* He laid the foundation of the Karnataka school of music and gave inspiration to Tyāgarāja, a great devotee and musical composer. Purandaradasā was one of towering personalities of Karnataka who carried the message of Karnataka culture to every home and made Kannada literature a living force in the life of the common man.

Kanakadāsa

Kanakadāsa, a contemporary of Purandaradāsa, was an equally great devotee with an individuality of his own. When we look at the sources internal and external, we are able to gather that he was born in a shepherd family and rose to the position of an army chief by sheer merit. It seems that he renounced wordly life in response to a higher call, which he received during a battle. Like Purandaradāsa he went to Vijayanagara and became a beloved disciple of Vyāsarāya. There is an essential difference in his approach and that of Purandaradāsa in respect of religion. Purandaradāsa accepted the Maḍhwa doctrine *in toto* and cultivated such liberalism and courage as he could muster within its framework. Kanakadāsa was brought up in the Rāmānuja tradition in his early days but he kept himself open to all benign influences of religion and culture. The most potent influence was that of Maḍhwa faith, which he followed under the guidance of his Guru. He was, however, less committed and more catholic than Purandaradāsa.

Kanakadāsa wrote some long poems in popular metres besides devotional songs. Among them, *Rāmadhānya Caritre* is one of the few poems in Kannada with an original theme, relating to a debate between rice and ragi, each trying to establish its supremacy. Ultimately ragi, which is the staple food of the poor, is adjudged as superior by Rāma, who was asked to arbitrate. The poem is not just fanciful, it is symbolic as well. It wants to suggest that God is a champion of the poor, a votary of the common man. Another poem of his is a narrative, dealing with the well-known story of Nala and Damayanti in simple and flowing Kannada. The narration is gripping, not vague or halting. The noble character of the hero and the heroine stand out against the background of their trials and tribulations. The third work viz., *Mōhanaṭaranginī* is longer than others. The subject of this work is the love between Uṣa and Aniruddha as recounted in the *Bhāgavaṭa.* The work teems with descriptions, some of which seem to portray the contemporary life and the glory of the Vijayanagar Empire. The poem ends with an emphasis on the non-difference between the two gods Hari and Hara, thus revealing the *Bhāgavaṭa* or catholic attitude of Kanakadāsa in matters of religion.

It is in his songs that Kanakadāsa has given us the outpouring of his heart. The stream of his devotion to God has flowed full to the brim in these spiritual lyrics. He does not show much of a keenness to spread the tenets of any particular doctrine as Purandaradāsa does. He is mainly interested in single-minded devotion and is concerned with human values. His songs are not as numerous as those of Purandaradāsa but, like him, he has some evocatory songs to his credit and some others which may be called exhortatory. But by and large he is a great *Bhakṭa*, who sings of his surrender to the Divine and of the joy which he has derived thereby. For example, he says in one of his songs, 'This body is thine and this life is also thine. All the joy and sorrow that I experience day after day is thine. The ear that listens to sweet words and vedic lore is thine, the eye that looks at the beauty of bewitching women is thine. The five senses that get enmeshed in the web of *māyā* are thine. O Lord, how are men free as you are?' In another song, he asks people to rest assured that God is looking after all of us and that there is no cause for any anxiety. Kanakadāsa has at times played the role of a preacher like Puranparadāsa but he shows greater freedom of thought and universality of outlook. His understanding of the life of the people and of their idiom is deep. He has exposed social evils in a frank and forthright manner. He goes to the root of the matter in his analysis of society. For instance, his song on the question of *kula*, i.e., caste is in the form of a powerful argument. He says, 'They talk of *kula* times without number. Pray tell me what is the kula of men who have felt real bliss? When a lotus is born in mire, do they not bring it and offer to the Almighty?' Do not the gods of the earth drink the milk, which comes from the flesh of the cow? Do they not besmear their bodies with deer musk? What is the caste of god Narāyaṇa and of Śiva? What is the caste of *Ātman* and of *Jīva*? Why talk of *kula* when God has blessed you?' We appreciate the boldness of thought and expression and the aptness of imagery in this typical song of Kanakadāsa.

Jagannāthadāsa

Among the *dāsas* of *Dāsakūta*, who came in the wake of Purandaradāsa and Kanakadāsa, Jagannāthadāsa was a great personality, who broadened the devotional tradition. Combined in him were love of Sanskrit and faith in Kannada, a broad outlook coupled with adherence to the best in tradition, knowledge and devotion. He wrote a work called *Harikaṭhāmṛtasāra*, expounding the Maḍhwa doctrine in *ṣhatpaḍi* metre in a delectable manner. Though it is a philosophic work, heavy in thought in its major portion, the mode of expression is poetic and the language popular to the point of being ungrammatical. Apt similes, simple words and smooth rhythm, all these have made the works attractive for the layman, who is interested in knowing Maḍhwa philosophy. In some of the *sanḍhis*, the intensity of his devotion and the liberality of his attitude exalt his sterling qualities as a saint

and a poet. The following lines bespeak the catholicity of outlook, which is characteristic of him and is not found elsewhere in this kind of writing. 'All souls in all the worlds are deserving of charity, all speeches are mantra and all work is worship, for one who is meditating on the Lord'. In his *kīrtanas*, which are not numerous, Jagannāthadāsa has harped on this theme, which appears to be an essential aspect of his realisation of God as omnipresent. One of his great songs is a magnificent integrated image, expressive of his god-realisation and suggestive of his towering personality. The song begins with the refrain thus: 'The worship of the Lord is so easy for those who understand. Unfortunate is he, who does not understand'. Some of the stanzas in this song convey the following purport: 'The universe is the *mantapa*, the earth is the pedestal, the rain is his ablution (*abhiṣēka*), the quarters his clothing, the *malaya* breeze is fragrant incense, all the grain grown on earth is the offering (*Naivēḍya*), the lightning that shines is the *Ārati* of camphor'. Jagannāthadāsa is one of the great minds of Karnāṭaka, representing the broad-based culture of the land.

CHAPTER VII

THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD—2

OTHER BHĀGAVATA POETS

Kumāravālmīki

We have said earlier that quite a number of poets of the *Bhāgavaṭa* outlook were inspired by Kumāravyāsa and wrote in Kannada. They brought in most of the precious literature in the Vēdic tradition. The first to appear on the scene was Kumāravālmiki, who followed in the footsteps of Kumāravyāsa and rendered the *Rāmāyaṇa* into Kannada in over 5000 stanzas of *Bhāmini ṣaṭpaḍi* metre. This is the first known work, embodying a complete Kannada version of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*. Much earlier, Nāgacandra had written his *Rāmāyaṇa*, basĕd on the Jaina version of Vimalasuri. By and large, Kūmaravālmīki has closely followed Vālmiki and made but a few alterations in the structure of the story. He has throughout depicted Rāma as an *avaṭāra* of Viṣṇu and upheld the *Bhāgavaṭa* or devotional approach in his exposition. He has tried to bring out some of the good qualities of Rāvaṇa, probably under the influence of the Jaina version. He is a good artist, endowed with a capacity to narrate effectively with a sense of varied character. His numbers flow smooth and neat. On the whole, however, Kumāravālmīki generally moves on an even keel and hardly rises to great poetic heights. Another poet, Ṭimmaṇṇa by name, who was a protege of Kṛṣṇaḍēvarāya, continued the *Mahābhāraṭa* story where Kumāravyāsa had left and completed it. But as he himself has said, the river Yamuna of his poetry flowed side by side with the heavenly Gangā of Kumāravyāsa, thus indicating the difference in their quality.

About this time, the Bhāgavata, which may be called the Bible of the *Bhakṭi* school, was rendered into Kannada for the first time. Its authorship is ascribed to Cātuviṭhalanātha. However, there is a view that more than one author has contributed to its workmanship. It is divided into as many as 280 sandhis, running to over 12,000 stanzas. It closely follows the original work in Sanskrit.

Lakṣmīśa

Kumāravyāsa Kannada put into the first ten parvas of the *Mahābhāraṭa* while Ṭimmaṇṇa did the rest. Lakṣmīśa undertook to give to the Kannada world *Jaimini Bhāraṭa* containing the story of the Horse-sacrifice, which Pāndavas performed after their victory in the

great war. Lakṣmīśa has generally followed the story in the original Sanskrit work by Jaimini. But he used his discrimination in omitting some portions and expanding some others with the result that his version is more than an adaptation, a product of his re-creative imagination. The original work is mostly of the nature of a purāṇa. The art of Lakṣmīśa lay in transforming it into a poem of a high order. He is one of the great story-tellers in the realm of Kannada poetry. Whatever the story or the episode, he makes it his own and turns it into an exquisite piece of art. He draws nice pictures, weaves a wreath of images and produces a symphony of sounds, which jingle with varied rhythm like the little bells in an anklet. The artistry of his composition some times borders on the artificial. But in the best portions of the work it spurts like a many-coloured fountain and evokes wonder coupled with genuine delight. His story has strayed into many by-paths like the sacrificial horse whose movements are free and unbridled. It would be more proper to call *Jaimini Bhāraṭa* a bunch of stories than a single story. It is the unity of the devotional sentiment (*Bhakṭirasa*) and not unity of narrative theme that characterises this work. In the different stories, narrated by him, his art matures as we proceed from his earlier to later stories, beginning with Sudhanwa and concluding with Candrahāsa. Candrahāsa is about the best story narrated by him.

The story of *Sītā-parityāga* i.e., the abandonment of Sītā by Rāma may be cited as an illustration, though it is loosely tagged on to the narrative complex of *Jaimini Bhāraṭa*. Lakṣmīśa has depicted the pathetic episode in minute detail. In particular, he has described exquisitely the effect on the mind of Sītā when Lakṣmaṇa reluctantly breaks the news to her that Rāma has abandoned her because of a scandal, spread by a washerman. Her immediate reaction was one of shock and sorrow, which was followed by courage and determination to face facts. She told Lakṣmaṇa, 'You can leave me here in the forest and go back. I cannot kill myself as I am carrying. I shall face whatever comes my way. But tell Kausalya, my mother-in-law that her son Rāma deserted me for no fault of mine'. Lakṣmaṇa could not move away. She said further, 'Why are you stopping here? Will not Rāma get angry if you are late in returning? I can seek the help of wild beasts. But Rāma is alone. Is there none to tell a king when he goes wrong?' We observe here how her mind is oscillating between love and concern for Rāma and protest against his ill-advised step. Next moment, she became pessimistic about the ability of others to intervene in the matter and resigned herself to her fate saying 'The fault does not lie with *merciful* Rāma' in a semi-sacrastic tone. This is how the poet has described the complex reactions of Sīṭā with a masterly understanding of the swift movements of her unsettled mind. Coming to the Canḍrahāsa story, we admire how it has been worked out as a perfect piece of narrative art. Nowhere else is the interest of the reader roused and maintained from first to last. The pathetic life of Canḍrahāsa as an orphan boy with no limit to suffering is set off by the saving grace of God, in whom he has full faith. The character

of the nurse, who brought him up after his parents' death is ennobling as a symbol of self-less service. The dark side of human nature is presented in the selfish and wicked character of minister Duṣṭabuddhi, who is only outwitted by the good fortune of Candrahāsa. As in Sītāparityāga, the natural sympathy of birds and beasts in the forest for the suffering has been described here most poetically, ending with a significant remark: 'When we see the love and sympathy of the fauna here, we feel like saying that a wild forest is much better than a town, which is peopled by jealous men and women!' Lakṣmīśa has delineated several characters like warriors who are devotees of God and women of different type. In his use of metre and language, he has combined the popular and the classical trends with a happy blend of erudition and ease. He is one of the gifted and great story-tellers in the vast range of Kannada literature. Though his work cannot be called a great work in its total effect, it certainly possesses elements of great art.

Gōpakavi is one of the poets who grew under the influence of Kumāravyāsa and Lakṣmīśa and wrote two works, viz., *Citrabhāraṭa* and *Nanḍimāhāṭmya*. *Citrabhāraṭa* deals mainly with the story of Vaṭsalāharaṇa as in the *Mahābhāraṭa* and is called so because it contains *ciṭrakaviṭā*, i.e., poetry of skilful composition. *Nanḍimāhāṭmya* is a more mature work in poetic quality rather than in narrative content. Another poet in the *Bhagavaṭa* tradition is Nāgarasa, who has for the first time rendered the *Bhagavadgīṭā* into Kannada, stanza by stanza with his interpretation, based on Śankara's *adwaiṭa* philosophy. He has named his work as *Vāsudēvakaṭhāmṛṭa*, the nectar of the story about Kṛṣṇa, the Lord. From Kumāravyāsa down to Nāgarasa, we notice this common trait of naming their works as the story about Kṛṣṇa, although Kṛṣṇa is not the principal character in some of them. It only shows their devotion to god Kṛṣṇa as part of the *Bhāgavata* tradition. In Nāgaraṣa's work, there is no story as such, nor is it a story about Kṛṣṇa. It is the philosophy of life preached by Kṛṣṇa and yet it is called *Vāsudēvakaṭhāmriṭa*. His rendering is precise, simple and clear.

Ratnākaravarni

Jaina poets of this period have chosen themes other than hagiography and developed them in indigenous metres in fairly simple language. Even when they have opted for old themes, they have adopted the new metre and the new style. One of the earliest among them, who came under the influence of Kumāravyāsa both in respect of the Bhāgavata approach and poetic expression was Bhāskara, the author of *Jīvanḍhara-carite*. He has followed the original story in Jaina tradition but has borrowed ideas and images peculiar to the Upaniṣads and the devotional lore, represented by the *Bhāgavaṭa*. There is no trace of it in the original works and it cannot be explained by reference to the Jaina doctrine except by overstretching the meaning. A clear example is the sentence meaning 'Will the ocean of worldly existence dry up without the remembrance of the name of the omniscient?' This sentence occurs

in the poet's praise of Jina. The idea of remembrance (Nāmasmaraṇe) and of complete surrender to god for the sake of emancipation does not fit in with Jaina idealogy. There is nothing striking in the narrative. But it is fairly good writing from the standpoint of poetic imagination and expression. Among the other Jaina writers who took the popular line, Ṣiṣumāyaṇa deserves mention as he wrote both his works in the well-known *sāngatya* metre. Later, it was Mangarasa III who wrote his *Nēmijinēśasangati* in the same metre along with his other works in *ṣaṭpadi*. It is noteworthy that the theme of Nēmijina which was treated in the *campu* form by more than one poet in the early period has been dealt with by Mangarasa in the *sāngatya* metre, showing the wind of change that had swayed Jaina writers of this time. Sāḷva is another poet who wrote in Kannada for the first time the Jaina version of the *Bhārata* in the *ṣaṭpadi* metre.

Ratnākaravarṇi is by far the most outstanding poet among the Jaina poets of this age. He is in fact one of the great masters of the muse in the vast range of Kannada poetry as he enriched it by presenting an integral life-vision in an indigenous medium of expression, viz., *sāngatya*. He was born in a kṣatriya family in Mūdabiḍare situated on the western coast of Karnātaka in the middle of the 16th century, at a time when the decline of Vijayanagar empire was imminent. The region, in which he was born and brought up, was a living centre of Jainism. He received the best education in poetry and philosophy with particular stress on Jainalogy. He appears to have studied and practised yoga as well under the able direction of a guru. Stories have come down to us about his love adventures and his change of religion. Whatever may be the element of truth in them, it appears certain from internal testimony that he was a full-blooded romantic but not a Bohemian. He was a person of independent mind, striving for an integral outlook in life. He has written *śatakas* (hundred-stanza poems) and songs in which he has dealt with Jaina philosophy and ethics.

Bharatēśavaibhava is his masterpiece, his Magnus Opus. The life and character of Bharatēśa and Bāhubali formed part of the life of Purudēva, the first Tīrthankara, whose illustrious sons they were. But there was no work, which had dealt with Bharatēśa as the hero of a poem and delineated his character in depth and in great detail. It is a unique feature of this work that in the conception of the character of Bharatēśa, the poet has attempted on a grand scale a creative embodiment of his vision of perfect life as a synthesis of seeming opposites. He is indebted to the well-known Jaina sources for the story in broad outline; but in utilising the source material he poured into it so much of his thought and experience that his work turned out to be an unparalleled creation because of its amazing life-vision and wealth of imagery, which went far beyond the original. It is nothing short of a miracle that he finished this poem of 80 *sandhis* and nearly 10,000 stanzas within nine months and carved in words a colossus of sublime character.

The story of this poem is very much less a story. It is built round a personality or rather the vision of an ideal person. As the

poet says, it describes the glory of a king of kings, who enjoyed endless regal power but became emancipated by burning down his karma in a moment as a *Jinayōgi.* It is not worldly glory, it is the glory of the spirit. It is the glory of synthesis of renunciation and enjoyment (*Tyāga* and *Bhōgā*), which is the natural culmination of a perfect life. In a sense, the poem does not have the amplitude or the structure of a vast epic. More or less it elucidates the daily chores of the hero in all possible situations. But his integral vision has pervaded the poem and lent meaning to every detail. Being the oldest son of the first Tīrṭhankara, he was enjoying life on a high level in the company of 96,000 wives, when a call came to him that he might go out for world conquest. He started on his campaign and victory went before him. When he was returning to his capital along with the gifts that he has received from vanquished kings of all countries, his discus (Cakra) stopped suddenly in front of the city gate, hinting that his brother was not prepared to accept his supremacy as a warrior. Unlike the story in other works, Bharatēśa summoned his brother and persuaded him with soft and winning speech to desist from battle. It was a triumph of non-violence. As a result, Bāhubali became a recluse and went to the forest for penance. Bharata called on his father to seek his blessing and returned to his kingdom. After some years, he also renounced worldly life, practised penance and attained liberation.

This story is for the most part borrowed from the original sources. But no source has given any idea of the distinctive personality of Bharateśa. It is to the great credit of Ratnākaravarṇi that he conceived that personality in the mould of his dream and delineated it in as minute a detail as possible, chiefly in the first part of his work of which he called *Bhōgavijaya.* This is a unique creation of his genius, for which he deserves our applause. The poem opens with the description of Bharatēśa as an ideal monarch sitting in his court and attending to his duties. One important deviation from the original is found in the confrontation between Bharata and Bāhubali. According to the original, a regular battle took place between the two brothers, in which Bāhubali defeated Bharata but retired to the forest himself as a contrary reaction to the craving and the egoism of his brother. In this poem, however, Bharata did not engage himself in a battle. He pursuaded Bāhubali by sweet argument to desist from combat. It is clear from this that Ratnākara exercised his discrimination in borrowing from the original and in departing from it, if it detracted from his conception of that character.

From the very outset, the poet has told us that Bharata was not an ordinary person but a symbol of a perfect man. His superhuman traits and the unbelievable number of his wives can only be justified by their symbolic character. The distinctive character of his personality has been described in minute detail. Raṭnākaravarṇi was a great lover of details, a painter in words. Not only in his own words, but also through the words of the poets, musicians, wives and even the royal parrot, he has described the great qualities of his hero and has

set forth his life-vision in rich imagery. For instance, he says of Bharata thus:

'He seemed to have been caught in the web of sensuous pleasure but he never got entangled in it. He appeared to be arrogant but was never really so. It was all the *līlā* (Sport) of one, who had seen the whole truth with a close look. He was like a fortress at one time and like an open countryside at another time. To his consorts he was like a sharp flowery shaft and like heaven itself personified'. The poet has described his life-vision thus 'A king should think of enjoyment as well as of his identity with the Atman. He should enjoy life but never to the detriment of his concern for dharma or virtue. He should cherish many desires but should be disinterested at heart. He should give only to the deserving. He should be vocal but know the value of silence. He should be like a poor man and like a king as well. Just as a maiden, dancing to the rhythm of music and drum, fixes her mind on the jar placed on her head lest it fall and at the same time takes care of her steps on the ground, so also, he should constantly care for higher values of life even when he cares for mundane matters.'

Bharata lived on a high plane in every detail of his daily routine both in speech and action. He discharged his several duties as king, disciple, husband, son and brother with a spontaneous sense of duty and propriety. In this portrayal of the perfect man according to his conception, Ratnākara has projected his image of the best in Kannada character as a typical expression of the best in Indian culture. For example, after his duty as a king was over, Bharata put aside all the insignia of royal splendour and stood waiting in simple dress at the palace gate for the ascetic guests, who were expected to receive his humble hospitality. No servant was to attend on him when he alone was to serve the honoured guests. No member of the retinue was to hover about or bow to him at that time. When he was standing alone, leaning against a pillar and scanning all the directions for the expected guests with his finger on the tip of his nose, it seemed as if he was thinking as to when he would swim across the river of wordly existence and attain salvation. In this way, the poet has taken care to see that every detail has contributed to the building up of a significant image of that exalted personality. One of the strange things in the extraordinary life of Bharata was the inordinate number of his wives. If an ideal man were to have so many wives, one might ask, what sort of an ideal does it place before us? It is no solace to say that the poet had to adhere to the original because Ratnākara was not a blind imitator. It has meaning only as a symbolic art-device meant to uphold the infinite power of Bharata's conjugal love. It seems to suggest that for a person with spiritual and synthetic outlook it is easy to get on well with as many wives whereas it is difficult for a person, who does not possess that outlook and know the secret of success, to live in accord even with one wife. On more than one occasion the wives of Bharata have praised his excellent qualities as a husband. 'Like the one sun in the sky, whose image is found in all the jars, filled with water, he has

made an abode in the hearts of all his women. Just as the deer and the tiger live in peace in forest, in which a hermit dwells, so also all the wives live and love him without any feeling of jealousy. He has made us forget our parent home, driven away our sleep and submerged us in bliss all the time.' The poet has seized every opportunity to show how happy they were, how they ate together after serving him a meal and how they were rollicking in fun even when they were going upstairs to meet him in his chamber and offer their presents to him. There are glowing descriptions of the amorous dalliance of these damsels in the company of the king. But the whole thing is set on a higher key. What may be called bizarre and obscene has been raised to a dignified level, implying that the pleasures of the body are worth having, if they are properly understood. Music, dance and drama are described more than once in the course of the poem with matchless zeal, insight and abandon. The joy of music is described thus: 'The lady musicians sang in such a sweet and full-throated manner that they were as if spitting out the pearls that they had gathered from the bottom of the ocean of music. They demonstrated neat *ṭānas* in the development of *Rāgas* as if they were spraying in every direction the sweet nectar of music, with which they were full to the brim. When one of them started playing on the Vina, it looked as if she was waking up Goddness Saraswati with her graceful finger and beseeching her to help her in her music'.

After all the revelry is over, the ladies retire and the servants disappear. Immediately Bharata withdraws into himself and is in deep meditation. At that moment, he looks like one who has been in penance for thousands of years. His senses are his real servants because they come and go as he orders them. He is like one who fasts though eating his meal, a celibate though he enjoys life, a detached person though lord of the world, a hermit whose head has grown hair but whose mind is empty of all evil desire.

Though he was an emperor, Bharatēśa showed veneration for his mother. Once after a day of fasting, he went to his mother's residence after sending his wives in advance to look after her. When the mother came to know that he and his wives were also fasting, she chid them and set out for his palace lest he might feel exhausted in coming to her. Both of them met on the way. He bowed to the mother with deep respect and they together went to the palace. He served her at the end of the fast. He put her on a swinging couch and moved it to and fro as though he was trying to repay the debt he owed her when she put him in a cradle and brought him up. Thus a very simple situation has been made so thrilling and meaningful in every detail.

We have already referred to the episode between Bharata and Bāhubali. The sweet persuasiveness of Bharata therein is in keeping with his dignified stature. He told Bāhubali 'What is the great cause for which we need to fall out with each other? I have not taken any of your belongings nor have you taken mine. I am in the position of a king

and you in that of a prince because our revered father desired so. Are we foes of each other? If we, sons of Jina, quarrel with each other, we shall be writing an indelible edict of treachery for all to copy. Will you get fame by conquering me? Do I become famous by vanquishing you? Well, you have come to fight with me and your object is victory at the end. Is it not? Why fight like low people? I concede that victory is yours and defeat is mine!' At this, the kings and ministers on the side of Bharata cried, 'Can there ever be defeat to our lord?' Bharata said smilingly 'Why not? who is not defeated by Cupid?' Bāhubali is god Cupid according to Jaina tradition. After listening to Bharata's sweet and soft speech, the anger of Bāhubali vanished like the poison of a snake that disappears by the 'Garuda-mantra' and his heart cooled down.

There is description galore in this poem, but it is not of the conventional type. His main artistic purpose is to find symbols and images to describe his life-vision as typified by a great character. All his descriptions are aimed at the fulfilment of this purpose. He is particular about even minor details but he is the least worried about any poetic convention of the past. The synthesis in his vision has brought about similar spontaneous blending in his use of language and metre, over which his mastery is astounding. *Sāngaṭya*, which is a metre arising out of folk tune and capable of being sung, has reached its zenith in his writing. His style has got the richness and the naturalness of popular idiom. His *Bharaṭēśavaibhava* not only reflects the grandeur of Bharatēśa, it is also his own grand lyric, a symbolic song of his life-vision. He is one of the towering poets in the Kannada language, worthy of standing shoulder to shoulder with the great masters like Pampa, Harihara and Kumāravyāsa.

Chapter VIII

THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD—3

ṢAḌAKṢARADĒVA AND THE REST

Darkness fell on the political and cultural life of Karnāṭaka after the fall of the Vijayanagar Empire in the middle of the 16th century. Just as thieves combine to work in darkness, several forces from outside conspired to seize the Kannada country and rob it of its wealth and pride. They achieved great success in demoralizing North Karnataka. But most of South Karnataka fortunately remained intact. It too was in imminent danger from time to time. But the jewel throne of Karnāṭaka shone with undiminished glory, thanks to the valour and the good fortune of the Mysore kings. Kannada language, literature and culture flourished under their liberal patronage.

Ṣaḍakṣari

Kannada literature came up with renewed vigour in the beginning of the 18th century during the reign of the Mysore ruler, Cikadēvarāja, who was a great patron of learning and letters. Classical poetry, which was out of vogue for a long period, came into its own again. Like the cuckoo, which is the first to announce the advent of the spring, Ṣadakṣari, a Vīraśaiva ascetic-poet, heralded the revival of the *campu* form through his works. A born poet and an erudite scholar that he was, he wrote three works of a classical stamp. Of them, his *Rājaśēkharavilāsa,* easily the best, contains the story of a devotee who brought out the significance of the name of God Śiva. The theme was tackled earlier but it had not gained classical importance, which it did in this work. The poet has avowedly followed Harihara in his choice of devotional theme but he has followed earlier *campu* writers in all other respects.

The story content of this work is inconsiderable and it is overlaid with lengthy descriptions resembling a thin bower bent down by the overgrowth of foliage. The movement of the story is rather slow and does not rouse our keen interest until we come to the concluding portion, in which the Tirukoḷavināçi episode occurs. Prince Rājaśēkhara was once riding a horse on the royal road along with his friend. The five-year old son of Tirukoḷavināchi rushed out of the house for play and was trampled to death by the horse of the minister accompanying the prince. When the mother came back to the house and

saw the tragedy, she was stunned with grief. Her lamentation on the death of her son is expressed in a very pathetic and moving passage. The work as a whole exhibits wit and skill of composition coupled with high poetic ability. Though it is the very first work of the poet, it shows astonishing merit as a poetic creation. His second work, '*Śabaraśankaravilāsa*' deals with the famous story of God Śiva's appearance as a hunter to test Arjuna's valour and power of penance before he blessed him with the Pāśupata weapon. Here also the story is thin and there are descriptions galore. There is in it more of Sanskrit-ridden diction and *double entendre* than in the first work. The story moves fast towards the close when the hunter pursues the quick-footed boar. The dialogue between God Śiva disguised as hunter and Arjuna as an ascetic, the ensuing duel and the final revelation are among the most interesting portions of this work. It is on the whole a composition of medium size and quality. The third work of this poet is a poetic biography in *campu* form of the saint Basavēśwara. One of the striking features of Kannada literature during the reign of the Odeyars of Mysore is the increasing number of poems which deal with historical themes direct. In the secular works of Pampa and others of the classical age, there was covert history, indeed, but their main purpose was not the writing of history in poetic form. We come across such works in this period. For instance, *Kanṭhīrava Narasimha-rājavijaya* of Govindavaidya, written in *sāngaṭya* metre is mainly a historical work, dealing with the life and the exploits of Kanṭhīrava Narasarāja, a ruler of the Mysore dynasty. A salient feature of this work is a realistic and graphic description of the political conditions and of the life of the people during that troubled time. Even as a poem, it is a work of considerable merit though it does not contain any narrative matter or character-study as such.

Another interesting feature of this period is the spurt of devotional literature inspired by the Śrīvaiśnava faith. Though this faith, founded by Rāmānuja, one of the three great *Ācāryas* in the Vedic tradition, had spread in Karnataka since the 12th century, there was no writing of any sort pertaining to it in Kannada. Under the patronage of the Mysore rulers, especially Cikadēvarāja, there was a classical revival, to which this faith supplied most of the themes and the philosophy underlying them. It is said that Cikadēvarāja himself wrote works like *Cikadēvarāja binnapa* and *Gītagōpala*—the former in rhythmic prose and the latter in song-form. However, it seems likely that these two were actually the compositions of Tirumalārya, a renowned scholar and poet, who was his minister and that they were fathered on Cikadēvarāja. Whether the king himself was an author or no, it is beyond doubt that he created a band of authors like Tirumalārya, Singarārya, Cikupāḍhyāya and Honnamma.

Tirumalārya deserves special mention as a gifted poet and stylist. Being a profound scholar in Sanskrit and Kannada, he wrote in both the languages. All his works deal with Cikadēvarāja, his brillant political career and his magnetic personality. A very large number of

persons and events in contemporary history find a prominent place in these works, which is a very rare thing in Kannada literature. Thus the works of Tirumalārya are a veritable source-book of Karnāṭaka history of those times. Even his work on poetics is called *Apraṭimavīra cariṭe* because the definitions given therein have been illustrated by reference to the heroic deeds of *Apraṭimavīra* a title of Cikadēvarāja, meaning an unequalled hero. *Cikadēvarāya Vamśāvaḷi* is his mature work in prose, which brought out the best in him. It is a peculiar blend of history, myth and faith. As a ministeı in the confidence of his patron, he was closely acquainted with contemporary politics, which he has described in minute detail. His descriptions very often are disproportionate and exaggerated. The most outstanding merit of the work is its rhythmic and rich prose style. Another minister of the same king, Cikupādhyāya by name, wrote more than 30 works in Kannada. All these works deal either with Śrīvaiśnava philosophy, tradition or biography and serve as an encyclopaedia for followers of that faith. Singarārya, the brother of Tirumalārya, wrote the first ever drama in Kannada, entitled *Miṭraviṇḍa Gōviṇḍa*. Even this is an adaptation of the Sanskrit play *Ratnāvaḷi*. From all available evidence, it is clear that Karnataka has had a continuous dramatic tradition in the past. But the first play which has come down to us is the one by Singarārya and that too is neither original nor remarkable as a rendering.

From early times we have works in Kannada which expounded one philosophy or the other. But it was during the Vijayanagar period and later that successful attempts were made to explain philosophic principles in simple and popular Kannada. Two works of this category are worthy of mention. One is *Anubhavāmṛta* by Mahalingaranga. It explains the *Advaita* philosophy of Śankara in the simplest possible style in *bhāmini* metre. It seems with striking similes which have a popular appeal. The other work *Harikaṭhāmṛṭasāra* by Jagannātha-dāsa contains an exposition of Madhva philosophy in the same metre. This is also rich in analogy and simple in diction. However, there is more of devotional ardour in Jagannāthaḍāsa, whereas there is more of logical reasoning in Mahalingaranga.

Honnamma occupies a distinct place among the poets, who basked in the sunshine of Cikadēvarāja's patronage. She is said to have been just an ordinary woman in the retinue of the King's servants. Singa-rārya discovered her poetic gift and imparted her the necessary education and training. The king was pleased to know about her and got the queen to persuade her to express herself in verse. As a result, Hon-namma wrote her work known as *Haḍibaḍeya Dharma* (meaning 'duties of a devoted wife') in the popular *Sāngaṭya* metre. This is a good poem mainly exhortative in content. It has little narrative interest though now and then short stories drawn from our ancient literature are told by way of illustration. It is of the nature of advice to married women, based on age-long Indian tradition. But it is most pleasing to note that the advice has shaped itself into a literary piece of rare

beauty and also that it has been addressed to men as well as women. The poetess has condemned the attitude of some people who look down upon women and forestalled what may be called a modern approach to the question of women's status in society. The style of the poem is a model of pure and chaste Kannada. It is not clumsy though it has got the rigour of classical poetry. The composition in the *sāngaṭya* metre flows easy and makes delightful reading. Another poetess, Heḷavanakatte Giriyamma by name, lived in the later period. She was God-mad and wrote some songs and stories under divine inspiration. She may be compared to Mīrābai for her intense devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. She was a woman mystic of astounding power, following in the trail of Akkamahādēvi of the twelfth century.

During the 18th and 19th century, we come across a large number of works in Kannada. Some of them were produced under the patronage of Mysore rulers. By and large, their quality was poor. A special mention must be made of the rich contribution of Mummaḍi Kṛṣṇarāja Wodeyar of Mysore dynasty. He wrote fifty works in Kannada and encouraged literary talent in the authors of his time. Aḷiya Lingarāja and Kempunārāyaṇa stand out prominently in the literary group, which was patronised by him. Kempunārāyaṇa, in particular, wrote the story of *Mudrārākṣasa* under the title '*Mudrā-manjūṣa*' in a peculiarly mixed prose style, which has no parallel in the history of Kannada writing. He can be called a harbinger of modern Kannada in spite of the fact that he intermixed the old and the new styles in an arbitrary manner. Among the poets, who lived towards the close of the 19th century, Basavappa Śāstri deserves a special niche in the literary gallery for his exceptional poetic gift and his talent for translation. His rendering of Kālidāsa's '*Śakunṭalā*' earned him the title of *Abhinava Kāliḍāsa*. He rendered not only Sanskrit plays but translated Shakesphere's Othello also under the title '*Śūrasēna Caritre*', thus pioneering the work of translating foreign classics into Kannada.

Lakṣminārāyaṇa Nandalike alias Muḍḍaṇa, who was born at the end of the 19th century and who ended his brief life at the dawn of the 20th century, became a real symbol of the transition from old to modern Kannada literature. During his short span of 31 years, he suffered the onslaughts of poverty and disease as a poor drill teacher but enriched Kannada with his folk plays (*Yakṣagāna*), prose and poetical works. He was among the first to receive the impact of the west through English literature. He wrote a few chapters of a novel called *Godāvari* but could not complete it. Though he was yearning to write in the new vein, he actually wrote all his three works in old Kannada for fear that they might not be recognised and published if he wrote in modern Kannada. He went further and fabricated a lie that those works were written by a poet, called Muḍḍaṇa, belonging to an earlier period. For some time a controversy was raging as to whether Muḍḍaṇa was the same person as Lakṣmīnārāyana. Later, it was proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that they were identical.

Ramāśwamēḍha is easily the best among his three works, which deal with one aspect or the other of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The main theme of this prose work is the story complex, based on *Paḍmapurāṇa* and woven round the horse-sacrifice performed by Rāma after his exile, return home and coronation. The greatest attraction of this work is the creation of the two characters of Muḍḍaṇa and Manōramā, the poet and his wife. Through their lively and lovely dialogue, they have provided a framework for the main theme and out-shone it. They start the story, intervene now and then and conclude it, representing the attitudes of the poet and the critic. The work begins with a glorious description of the rainy season, adorned with new imagery and shorn of old convention. The prose style of Muḍḍaṇa has a charm and rhythm, which is unique in the entire realm of Kannada literature.

CHAPTER IX

THE BEGINNING OF MODERN LITERATURE

WE HAVE so far given a bird's-eye-view of Kannada literature produced in the ancient and medieval periods. In the chapters that follow, it will be our endeavour to trace as to when modern Kannada literature came into being and to describe how it developed in the present century. As in the two earlier periods, it is difficult to put our finger on the exact date of the beginning of this period as well. As is well-known, day breaks at the end of night under the veil of darkness. It is not easy to detect the point of time when it dawns. Likewise, modern literature makes its first appearance with the marks of old literature on it. We cannot therefore say when precisely it came into its own. Broadly speaking, it will not be far from truth to state that modern Kannada literature had its dawn in the third decade of the 19th century, saw the light of day in the middle of the century. It was in the 20th century only that it saw the full flood of light. Even then, the sun of genuine creative writing rose on the horizon of Kannada in the third decade of this century. It appears that the period of transition was a fairly long one like the lingering dawn seen in some parts of the earth. The creative genius did not blossom forth in varied hue until after 1920.

As in other Indian languages, modern literature in Kannada arose as a result of the powerful impact of English education and the new mode of thinking. This impact is clearly visible in the theme, content, form and style of the literature which has come up during the last 40-50 years. Of course, the inner urge seeking new trends of expression was there. There was also a synthetic outlook, seeking to bring together the old and the new in a happy fusion. This kind of outlook was in the best traditions of Kannada culture as it shaped over more than a thousand years. Thus modern literature in Kannada took birth when the inner urge and the synthetic outlook of Kannada writers came under the influence of the west through English language and literature. It is not a complete truth that writing in modern Kannada is just a product of external influences.

People of the west were coming to India as traders and adventurers from very ancient times. They had set foot on the soil of Karnataka, travelling through the western sea-route and had roamed about this part of the country. It was only during the British period that the impact of their life and literature was strongly felt. The British

came to India originally for purposes of trade. They gradually understood the weaknesses of the Indian people, took advantage of the developing situation in the country and became masters of the entire land by their policy of divide and rule as well as by their might of superior arms. They taught English to the people in order to forge a link between the rulers and the ruled. This recoiled on them. One can see the strange hand of destiny in this process. That system of education, on the strength of which the rulers had thought of making Indians blind admirers of the British Empire and of keeping them in permanent bondage, that very system caused the upsurge of patriotic emotion and released the forces of liberation.

Free India, which at one time appeared to be a vain dream, became a reality in course of time as a result of the suffering and sacrifice of the people under able leadership. But the British had dismembered Karnataka into several odd parts and thrown it into the hands of those who stood by their side in the struggle for power, thus wiping out the very identity of the land and its people. Quite apart from literature and culture, the survival of Kannada as a language was itself in jeopardy. It became distorted in different ways, subject to the onslaughts of different languages, particularly in the border areas. Kannadigas forgot their identity and looked upon distortion as a natural condition. A sort of double slavery had enthralled these people as a result of English education.

Fortunately, however, educated Kannadigas awakened to a new national consciousness, which combined love of India with love of the Kannada land and found no contradiction in it. They placed before themselves the ideal of reviving Kannada language, literature and culture. Their passionate love of Kannada spread through every nook and corner, though in the initial stage some of them were dubbed as fanatics and fire-eaters. 'Free India and united Karnataka', became the mantra of the awakened people of the land. What could be more strange irony than this, which resulted from the very education, which tried to thwart it?

The Karnāṭaka of those days which was split up into several administrative units, came under western influence in varied ways and at different times. South Kanara or Coastline Karnāṭaka which was included in Madras province then, received the benefit of English education and imbibed new ideas earlier than other parts. The educated people of this part developed a new outlook on life and literature. Especially the Christian missionaries rendered signal service to Kannada though their main purpose was to spread their religion. It is they who gave modern Kannada its script which is now in vogue. It was formed on the basis of the past. It was they who started the first printing press in Kannada. Not only this, they wrote and published works on grammar, prosody and lexicon with the help of Indian scholars in the field. These served as aids to the study of Kannada language and literature. The names of scholars such as Kerry, Maccerrel, Rieve, Kittel, Rice and Caldwell deserve to be remembered with gratitude and

veneration, for their contribution to Kannada scholarship in the formative stage. In the old Mysore state, literary research and publication of old works got under way under royal patronage. The collation and editing of inscriptions was undertaken on a large scale. Lewis Rice brought out several volumes of Epigraphia Carnatica and earned the gratitude of the erudite public. The epigraphs, which these volumes contained, gave to Kannadigas an insight into the history and culture of their land.

In addition to inscriptions, old works both poetical and scientific were published for the first time. It was as if a grand old temple buried underground for centuries together had suddenly come to the surface with all its pristine glory. For the people of the Kannada land, it was a discovery of their rich heritage, evoking feelings of elation and pride.

In north Karnāṭaka, it took long for the darkness of the night to disperse. English education was slow to spread and the stranglehold of other dominating languages on the minds of the educated did not loosen soon. Even today it has not completely disappeared. In the primary schools of this area in the latter half of the 19th century, Marathi was taught to the Kannada people as their first language. The Education Department took years to realise that the language of the region was Kannada and that too at the instance of an Englishman, who toured this part as an education Officer. It was then decided to switch over from Marathi to Kannada in the primary stage. But there was hardly any textbook, worth the name. The writing of textbooks in Kannada was started in right earnest. Among the educationists and authors, who played a big role in this task, grateful mention must be made of deputy Cennabasappa and Ventaka Rango Kaṭṭi. In course of time, the right sort of education in Kannada and English produced a new educated class of people who felt proud of their heritage and dreamt dreams of enriching it with their creative output in modern literary forms like the lyric, the short story and the novel, with which they had become familiar in their study of English literature.

The first stage of Modern Writing (1820-1920 A.D.)

We have said before that modern literature had its dawn in the third decade of the 19th century. The main reason for this statement is that the style of *Muḍrāmanjūṣā* by Kempunārāyaṇa of 1823 is a curious blend of the old and the new. Earlier, of course, the ground for modern writing was being prepared by the progressive outlook and the encouragement of the Mysore ruler, Kṛṣnarāya III (1798-1868). He was himself an author of nearly fifty works, though it is likely that some of them might have been fathered on him. Except two or three, these works are in prose. This indicated that prose would dominate the literary scene in years to come. Another royal author of this period Aḷiya Lingarāja by name, wrote as many as 47 works in *campu*, *sāngaṭya* and other forms. Though it is a matter of pride that members

of the royal family wrote more copiously than any author in the past, most of it was mere composition with less of the creative element. Neither security of royal patronage nor insecurity due to lack of royal encouragement paved the way for quality writing, though it made for quantity. During this period most of what may be called new in approach and style was of the nature of translation or adaptation. As already suggested, a bold attempt was made in *Muḍrāmaṇjūṣā* to mix modern Kannada with old and thus herald in a small measure the advent of modern prose. A translation of the Holy Bible by William Kerry was finished in 1809, though it was published in 1823. It turned out to be the first prose work in modern Kannada.

One notable feature of this period is the rise of Kannada drama. In the history of Karnāṭaka spread over more than a thousand years, there is ample evidence to show that a kind of dance-drama was prevalent since early times. But the first extant drama was *Miṭravinḍā gōvinḍa* by Singarārya of the 17th century. We come across some plays at the beginning of the 19th century, most of them being of the *Yakṣagāna* type. It is a folk drama with music and dance as its salient features. Songs were composed and set to music but the dialogues in this drama were meant to be extempore. They were not reduced to writing. In this century, however, the song part was written out lest it might get lost. Among composers of *Yakṣagāna*, Subba and *Śānṭayya* deserve special mention. This type is peculiar to coast-line Karnataka, especially to South Kanara. In north Karnāṭaka, it assumed different forms, one of them being known as *Kṛṣṇa-Pārijātā* by Aparāla Timmaṇṇa, which became extremely popular. The professional theatre came into being under the influence of similar activity in other parts of India. Under the benevolent patronage of Mysore rulers, drama-writing for the new stage got into stride. Basavappa Śāstri known as *Abhinava Kāliḍāsa*, produced fine renderings of Abhijnāna Sākunṭala, Uṭṭararāmacharita and Chandakauṣika. His translation of Shakes-peare's *Othello* under the title *Sūra Sēna Cariṭa* was the first example of foreign influence in creative writing, known to us. It was published in 1895. Another translation of Othello entitled *Raghavēnḍrarao* was written by one Curamuri and published in 1885. Another set of trans-lations from Sanskrit drama came forth from the pen of D.N. Muḷa-bāgilu. If the prose of Kempunārāyaṇa was in mixed style, the verse of Muḷabāgilu was also equally mixed and made strange reading. In this period, dominated by translation, a certain amount of original writ-ing came to the fore. In the field of drama, it is remarkable that one Venkataramaṇa Śāstri wrote a short social play called *Iggappa Heggadeya Vivāhaprahasana* and published it from Bombay in 1887. The play is a farcical comment on the social evil of sale of girls in the marriage market. It is written in the spoken language of Havyaka, which is a dialect of Kannada. It made history because it turned out to be the first social play in modern Karnataka with a keen sense of realism. Later in 1919-20, Huilgol Nārāyaṇarao produced a number of effective social plays in north Karnāṭaka dialect. Amateurs put them on the

boards and held the stage for some time. Kerūr Vāsudēvācarya, a versatile journalist and writer, adapted English drama, mainly some of Shakespeare's plays to local setting and idiom to great effect. His *Paṭivaśīkaraṇa* as a successful adaptation of 'She stoops to conquer' proved a rage on the Kannada stage. After 1920, T. P. Kailasam and Śrīranga brought about a revolution in social drama by their varied technique, deep character-study and profuse use of colloquial dialect. They were followed by a number of playwrights, who entertained the audience by skilful treatment of social themes.

In the sphere of short story and fiction, a new atmosphere for original writing was being created by the process of translation, which placed models to emulate before the budding authors. The first novel viz., *Yāṭrikana Sancāra*, a translation of Bunyan' s*Pilgrim's Progress* by R. Viegal was published in 1847. Afterwards, S. G. Narasimhācār brought out translations of Allauddin's magic lamp, Aesop's fables and Gulliver's travels. B. Venkatācār translated into Kannada Bankimcandra's short stories and novels in Bengali. He translated stories from Arabian nights as well. Gaḷaganāṭha adapted Marathi fiction to Kannada setting and wrote original fiction also and created a genuine taste for reading by his numerous writings. Panje, Kerūr and M. N. Kamat started writing original short stories in the first decade of the 20th century. There was a touch of creativeness in the short collection entitled *Nāda nelegāra* by Śivarudrappa Kulkarni and similar collections by other writers. The creative urge gradually spread to fiction. The credit for being the first social novel goes to *Inḍirā Bai* by Gulwādi Venkaṭarao, which was published in 1899. Then followed *Vāgḍevi* by Bolār Bāburao in 1905, *Rōhini* by Gulwādi Annājirao in 1907, *Indira* by Kerur in 1908. Kerur's *Yaḍumahārāja* published in 1916 was the first historical novel, written on one's own. Later, M. S. Puṭṭanna wrote his novels which revealed a penetrating insight into the social milieu of his time. In Kerur's social novel, *Inḍirā*, the story and plot are both original but some of the characters are influenced by the progressive ideas current in the Maharastra of those days. In the novels of M. S. Puttaṇṇa, however, there is aṇ astonishing sense of realism and an indigenous quality in their social setting, character-study and dialogue.

The poetry of this period has variety in outward form, but by and large it is hackneyed and insipid in its essence. Its language is slowly turning to new forms and phrases along with old ones. As in drama and fiction, new poetry came out in translation. The very first example is to be found in the translated verses of *Yāṭrikana sancāra* of 1857, which has already been mentioned as a rendering of *Pilgrim's Progress*. The English verses of the original are rendered into simple Kannada. Some of them are in old *bhāmini* metre, whereas others are four-lined verses, patterned after English verse of that category. They assume a special importance as they are the very first instances of the new metre, fashioned on the old basis. In a missionary book[1] of songs of about the same time, we come across Kannada rendering of

English and German songs, which were set to western music. In some of them, rhyme has figured both at the beginning and at the end, in others, it is end-rhyme only. A new kind of four-lined stanzas with feet of 3 *mātras* each has been experimented upon. New poetry mostly took the form of translation at the close of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century. Among the persons, who rendered English poetry into Kannada, prominent mention must be made of H. Nārāyaṇarao, Panje Mangēśarao, S. G. Narasimhācār, Gōvinda Pai and last but not the least, B. M. Śrīkanṭhayya (Śrī)-all these were pioneers in the literary field. Their writings served as an incentive for original lyrical poetry in modern Kannada. All except Śrī mostly employed old metres and old rules of composition. It was Śrī who became a champion of the new metre and the new style. The tendency to break new ground had been manifest in missionary poems and songs. But their appeal was limited. Śrī, however, proved to be a great translator and a poet of original genius in his own right. As such, he made a name for himself as a pathfinder and a pioneer of outstanding merit. His work *English gītagaḷu* which contains renderings into Kannada of some well-known English lyrics has been rightly regarded as a milestone in the history of modern poetry. All the translators from English including Śrī testify to the fact that generally a good translator is an original poet. H. Narayanarao, of course, is not known to have written any poems of his own. But S. G. Narasimhācār wrote some. Panje Mangēśarao and Śrī gave to Kannada remarkable lyrics though in a small number. Gōvinda Pai is acclaimed as one of the eminent poets of the modern period. Panje appears to be among the first, who wrote original poetry in modern Kannada. Along with him, Gōvind Pai, Śrī, Śāntakavi and Bēndre laid the foundation of modern lyrical poetry.

The second stage of Modern Writing (1921-1958)

We took a rapid survey of modern Kannada literature during the last hundred years since its inception. Like the Sun, who brightens the eastern horizon with myriad rays, writing in modern Kannada shone with singular lustre in varied forms of expression. 1921 was a significant year in the history of India and Karnāṭaka. It was in this year that Mahatma Gandhi launched the non-co-operation movement against British regime and gave a call for supreme self-sacrifice at the altar of freedom. The country was rocked by unprecedented awakening. Young people were inspired by high ideals of patriotism, self-sacrifice, love of Swadeshi and love of one's language. Songs of freedom rent the air. New urges, new themes, new styles and new metres became the order of the day in the realm of literature. Just as patriots non-cooperated with the foreign government in the cause of freedom, writers broke off with old conventions in order to assert their right of self-expression in their mother-tongue. As suggested before, the principles of liberty which the British taught us served as motive force

for liberating the country from British rule itself. The deep impact of English literature on the educated Indian brought about a profound change in the form and spirit of Indian literature. The educated section of the community felt overjoyed on reading Shakespeare and Milton, became one with the lyrics of Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, drew substance from the thoughts of Mill and Morley and received inspiration from the novels of Scott and Dickens.

Their minds were packed with situations and characters from English literature. Later, there was a reaction to over-enthusiasm for every thing English. Some of them showed eagerness to get themselves acquainted with Indian culture. Another vista was opened up to them on a study of the Vedic lore, including Vēdānta. A few of them set their heart on effecting a synthesis between the cultures of the East and the West. The new spirit, which animated the whole country, animated Karnāṭaka also though a little later than elsewhere. It was from 1920 onwards that it became widespread in the political and cultural life of the region with an increasing love of one's country going hand in hand with love of one's language. Organised efforts to unify the land and the language were set afoot by bodies like Vidyāvardhaka Sangha and Kannada Sāhitya Pariṣat. A new prose was taking shape in newspapers, journals and books. The time was ripe for original creative writing from 1921 to 1947. The country went through ordeal after ordeal in the struggle for freedom and attained freedom from foreign rule on the 15th of August 1947. During this period, the struggle for existence was equally keen. Literature also had its tug of war. In more senses than one this may be called a period of struggle for freedom. The period after 1947 may be called the period of post-freedom activity. Some hold the view that the years from 1939 onwards during the struggle for freedom were marked by the Progressive Literature movement. During the last 30-40 years of this century, mainly after the attainment of freedom, several events and forces have had varied impact on the life and literature of the Kannada people, resulting in diversity of content and variety of form. This is more intensified now than before. Literature today is as complex as life. It is, therefore, not fair to brand a particular period as possessing certain marked characteristics and conclude that the later period established itself by driving away all the trends of the earlier period.

The first outburst of new poetry was mostly in the form of translation or adaptation. It cannot be denied that a good rendering of a poem in another language can have creative quality. In the next stage, original creation, emanating from one's own personal response to life around came out in abundance. The pioneers of the new poetry movement were Sri D. V. G. and Māsti on Mysore side, Panje, Gōvinda Pai and Muḷiya Timmappayya on Mangalore side, Bēndre, Sāli and Ānandakanda on Dharwar side. Young and budding poets rallied round them. Particularly, the Taḷiru group under the guidance of Śrī, the *Mitramanḍali* under the guidance of Panje and the *Geḷeyara Gumpu* under the guidance of Bēndre formed the procession of modern poetry

in the early period. It is true that English-educated people were by and large in the forefront of this literary movement. And yet it cannot be overlooked that poets who knew a little English or no English at all attained eminence by their creations in the new vein.

Kuvempu, Puṭina, Śankarabhaṭṭa, Vināyaka and others, who came under the influence of the elders with whom they came in close contact, offered a new wealth of lyrics to the Kannada world, being inspired by English poetry each in his own way. Some of them sang with rapture about the past glory of the Kannada land—the best in its culture and literature. Madhuracenna and Simpi Lingaṇṇa, who were poets of note, coming from the countryside, were among the first to collect folksongs from the lips of illiterate people and publish them in book-form. This work was later continued in other parts of Karnataka. Bendre, one of the most eminent poets of this age, wrote some of his deeply meaningful poems in the folk manner. It is noteworthy that the same trends which manifested in England at the time of Wordsworth and Coleridge showed up in Karnāṭaka also, particularly in respect of the revival of interest in old ballads and their impact on contemporary writing. This may be called as the age of lyrical or romantic poetry in Modern Kannada. Freedom, novelty and diversity were some of the salient features of this poetry. In old literature, there was a lyrical element, mostly committed to a mystical or religious school of thought. Modern lyric, however, declared its freedom from all dogma. The poet found his freedom for self-expression. This did not mean that he entirely broke away from the past. It only meant that he was free to do so, if he so chose and also free to make it his own by using such of it as suited his temperament and experience. Under the western influence, the modern poet adopted new literary forms like the blank verse, the free verse, the sonnet and the opera. Though the new poetry was socially conscious, it was largely inward and subjective. Reacting to this trend, the progressive writers formed a vocal group in Karnāṭaka as a branch of the All-India body. During the second world war, which started in 1939, it took the form of an agitation, urging writers to be proletarian in outlook and write about the worker in the field and factory. But its impact was short-lived. India became free in 1947. The problems of free India did not find an early solution. As years went by, they became more complicated in the context of an immature democracy. Some of the poets felt strongly that the new situation called for a presentation in new imagery and new technique. Modernist poetry was thus born. Vināyaka was the earliest to write modernist poëms and to spell out its idealogy. Aḍiga and others followed with their own concept of modernism and asserted that the days of romantic poetry were numbered. A battle of wits ensued as to the nature and function of modernist poetry. It now seems that there are different schools even among modernist writers.

Short story had its rise in the writings of Panje, Kāmat and Kerūr. It grew into a wider stream in the stories of Māsti. It has flowed on

with an expanse and force of its own since 1920. Māsti is the first short story writer in the modern sense of the term. His short stories reveal an art of effortless ease more than any conscious technique. The main source of this inspiration is his deep understanding and appreciation of the life of the people around him and their culture which they reflect in their words and deeds. We observe a similar approach in the stories of Ānandakanda, C. K. Venkaṭarāmayya, Gōrūr Rāmaswāmi Iyengār and Kṛṣṇakumār though varying in content and manner according to their temperament. All these stories hold the mirror up to the different facets of the life of the people, particularly in the rural areas. Kārant, A. N. Kṛ, Tarāsu and others have spotlighted the follies and foibles, the sorrows and the sufferings of the people. Story writers like Mirji Annārao and Basavarāj Kaṭṭīmani have drawn lurid pictures of the poverty and the famine that stalk the land. Ānand and Gōpālakṛṣṇa Rao have depicted the beauty and the joy of life though they are alive to the misery that surrounds them. Both of them have handled the short story with an eye on its technique. The modernists have made significant contribution to the short story in their analysis of the modern mind and in the symbolic presentation of their theme. It is no exaggeration to say that the short story in Kannada is diverse in theme, comprehensive in its range and varied in technique. At the same time one must admit that some of the stuff is weak and immature, is imitative without recognising the source and leans more towards quantity than quality. On the whole, the Kannada short story has reached a standard of performance which is only next to modern Kannada poetry.

We have said earlier that original fiction in Kannada began with pioneers like Guḷavādi, Bolār, Kerūr and Puṭṭaṇṇa. Social novel, inspired by a new humanism, became more prevalent in course of time. At the beginning, idealistic realism influenced its approach and the life of the middle class dominated its theme. Gradually it widened its scope and depicted the life of the poor and down-trodden. Ānandakanda, Kārant, A. N. Kṛ, Kuvempu, Gokāk, Kaṭṭīmani, Tarāsu, Niranjan, Mirji, Inamdār, Purānik, Trivēni, M. K. Indirā and several others have enriched this field and reaped a good harvest. There is refreshing novelty in the choice of theme but we cannot yet vouch for variety, life being vast and problems many. *Kānūru Subbamma Heggadiṭi* and *Malegaḷalli Maḍumagalu*—these are the two big novels of Kuvempu, which reflect on a vast scale the life of the people in Malenād. *Maraḷi Maṇṇige* by Kārant is a novel of three generations, equally vast in its scope and meaning. *Samarasave Jīvana* by Gokāk is a novel of epic dimension, being an intensive character-study on an extensive canvass. As usual, cheap novels have multiplied and become more popular than quality fiction. Historical novel has its successful exponents in Ānandakanda, Dēvuḍu, Tarāsu, and Puttasvāmayya. K. V. Iyer has joined the band with his marvellous handling of the *Śāntalā* story. Younger writers have shown good promise in field. As in the west, regional, problematic and psycholog

especially stream of consciousness type and the modernist novels have adorned Kannada fiction.

In the sphere of drama, Kannada can boast of a few dramatists of exceptional genius who have given some of their best to this composite art. But it cannot be said that the Kannada theatre has come of age, though it is picking up. There is a wide gap between the professional and the amateur stage. There are not many plays which are genuinely popular by virtue of a combination of artistic quality and stage-craft. Kailāsam, Samsa, Śrīranga and Kārant are some of the eminent names in Kannada drama. They have given ample evidence of dramatic insight, keenness for experimentation in theme and treatment and an understanding of stage needs. Their plays, of course, have their merits as well as their limitations. Kailāsam stands high above others in the sparkle of his dialogue. Samsa has excelled in the handling of historical situations. Śrīranga has exhibited his mastery in scathing social satire, phantasy and ready wit. Kārant has succeeded in his experiments with the verse-play and the opera. The one-act play has come into its own in the hands of these dramatists along with Bēndre, Kuvempu, Parvaṭavāṇi and Enke. In recent years, Giriṣ Karnāḍ, Lankēṣ and others are making headway with a refreshing variety of theme and technique. Impromptu play and radio play have come up as new forms of dramatic art.

Essay both personal and reflective is absolutely new to Kannada and yet this art has been mastered by essayists like A. N. Mūrtirao, N. Kastūri, P. T. Narasimhācār, Bīci and Rāku. Some of them have excelled in the serious and reflective type; others in the humorous and satirical type. New writers are experimenting with this form. Scientific literature was scanty in the beginning but has been making tremendous advance, thanks to the sustained efforts of the publication wings of universities in the state and other enterprising publishers. Biographies and travelogues have increased in number along with philosophical and cultural books and works of research value in all departments of knowledge.

CHAPTER X

MODERN POETRY

IN THE last chapter, we made a brief survey of the progress of modern Kannada literature in some of the well-known forms. From this chapter onwards, we propose to deal with every important form at some length and to assess the contribution of the authors concerned to the growth of Kannada literature.

Among the very first throbbings of modern poetry, the poems of Panje (1874-1932) though small in number are remarkable in lyrical intensity and expressive vigour. Most of them were written for children and printed in school books. And yet their quality does not suffer in the least. *Uḍayarāga* is one of such, describing the colourful scene at sunrise and conveying a moral and a message in a skilful way. His best poem is *Ṭenkaṇa gāliyāṭa* in which he describes powerfully how the southern wind gathers momentum and works havoc wherever it blows. We find to our great astonishment how the poet has brought out the increasing tempo of the wind from slow to fast, with apt imagery and diction. The poem is a perfect piece of art with rhythm, word, speed, rhyme and sound all uniting in harmony to produce the desired effect.

B. M. Śrīkanṭhayya (Śrī) (1884-1946)

Śrī has been introduced already as a path-finder and a leader of the modern Kannada movement. His epoch-making little book entitled *English gītagaḷu* contains 3 original poems of his own along with sixty poems of translation from English poetry. He selected some of the well-known poems of English poets like Wordsworth, Shelley, Burns and Browning of the Romantic school and put them into Kannada verse. Though they are translations to all intents and purposes, they bear a stamp of originality in the very process of translation. In most of them, the poet has tried to grasp the essence of the original poem and transmitted it in fitting moulds of metre and diction. Some of them can be cited as good examples of successful translation. Among them, the rendering of 'the Bridge of Sighs' by Thomas Hood ranks the best. Through his work, Śrī gave a correct lead to the poets of the younger generation and laid the foundation of lyrical poetry on a secure basis. The themes of English poets like nature, love and patriotism took on the Kannada garb and inspired the younger poets of the day to dream of similar writing in Kannada. Śrī experimented

with new rhythms and patterns and evolved a genuine Kannada style based on pure Kannada words, garnered from the literary heritage. In this way, he blazed the trail and stood out as one of the masters, who inspired modern poetry and set it on the right course.

His own poems collected under the title *Honganasugaḷu* meaning 'golden dreams' have been rightly so called as they embody his broad-based life-vision, ardent love of India and Mysore and his perceptive understanding of the Kannada land, its past and promising future. One of his best poems is *Kannaḍa tāya nōṭa* which materialises in a continuous flow the tense vision of the Kannada mother as seen by him. Some of the poignant words that the mother uttered are as below:

'Listen, my brother. I am an old matron, who lived in a big way. And now am I poor and emaciate, seeing my children gone down, in utter languish. I have been leaner still. No death for me! No death and yet I am dying. Fresh rain falls and new streams flow, when all my sisters rejuvenate with a new sense of pride. They are all beautiful, worth their weight in gold. Look, look! Swinging to and fro they are all rejoicing—what a sight!' When at the end of this sad story, she says repeatedly 'my children do not have a single day of joy and festivity', we are touched to the quick. Written in the manner of an ode in six parts running to more than a hundred lines, this poem is an abiding source of inspiration. Among his other poems, *Śukragīte* sums up his broad life-vision. 'Truth alone will triumph and not untruth. Knowledge is nectar and not ignorance. Bow to *Viśvabhāraṭi*, Mother India of universal vision and not to anything less'.

Gōvinda Pai

Gōvinda Pai is one of the foremost poets of the first generation. His original poems have been collected in *Giḷivindu*, whereas his translations of Omar Khayyam and other stray poems form a distinct group. His poetic genius has found fulfilment in rich imagery, that is steeped in history and loaded with learning. Sometimes, he appears pedantic as he uses his own learned diction and appends explanatory foot-notes. There is no denying the fact that there is genuine poetry in some of the best that he has written. We can see his vigorous and dedicated view of life in his rendering of a German poem entitled 'Call to Battle'. His singular contribution lies in his profound understanding of some of the great men of the past as is evident in his larger poems in which he has described the last day in their life. His greatest achievement in this line is *Golgoṭhā*, which gives a very vivid picture of the events of the day on which Christ was crucified. This poem of 400 lines is an eloquent testimony to the sensibility and the imaginative power of an Indian poet, who chose a theme far away from his own setting in time and place, made a profound and detailed study of the history and the location of the sad event, assimilated all the material in the crucible of his mind and produced a great poem. The poem is an

intense creative act from the beginning to the end, adorned with apt imagery, significant detail and spontaneous diction. It abounds in metaphors and similes. They do not, however, outstep the bounds of propriety nor do they become pompous. The very first lines of the poem set its tone. 'The cock crew for the third time and became silent like the conscience of the Jews, who longed to kill Jesus and the moon went down, disgusted with the harsh manner of the hearing which the judge conducted'. When Jesus was taken to mount Golgoṭhā and put on the cross, he looked like a bird, clasped by a vulture, like the white crescent moon as he appears in the western sky, like an arrow fixed to the bow and like the fruit of immortality swinging on the tree of death. The similes here are so appropriate and significant. Gōvind Pai wrote his *Vaiśākhi*, another longer poem on the last day of Buḍḍha written in the same strain. It is also a long poem of 600 lines, displaying the same intellectual effort and the same imaginative insight. But it has not attained the sustained height of 'Golgoṭhā'.

D. V. Gundappa

D. V. Gunḍappa is another eminent poet of the first generation. His stray poems appear in collections like *Vasantakusumānjali* and *Nivēḍana*. In *Anṭahpuragītē* he has collected his songs, describing the beauty of the bracket figures in the famous Cennakēśava temple of Bēlūr. He has also rendered *Omar Khayyam* into Kannada under the heading *Umarana Osage*. His greatest work is *Manku Timmana Kagga*, a poem of nearly one thousand stanzas of four lines each. It has no story interest nor has it any character-study. It is a profound commentary on life by a poet of mature judgement. It also embodies the poet's philosophy of life based on his vast experience and deep understanding of the thought of the east and the west. All this wisdom has been generally transformed into good poetry and not merely versified as may be seen from the following illustrations. 'The knowledge that we get from books is like a jewel placed on the head', whereas the understanding that grows in the mind is like a flower that the tree bears'. 'Life is a *Jaṭka* vehicle, fate is its *sāheb* (driver), you are the horse, passengers according to his bidding, you have to run towards a marriage or a cemetery as directed. If you falter and fall, earth will greet you'. Besides making satirical comments on life, the poet radiates courage and confidence in words of wisdom such as these: 'Fight for justice like a client, remain aloof like a witness when the judgement is given, go through life like a hermit and be like a bird within', 'He who runs away from life for fear that it is a struggle, will he cease to be a victim of fate? Steel your heart, "mace" your mind, face your fate and you will surely win'.

Masti Venkates Iyengar (Srinivasa)

Masti is one of the great writers in modern Kannada. He has written a large number of lyrics and narrative poems under the penname

'Śrīnivāsa' and made a substantial and unique contribution to Kannada poetry. He has a distinct personality, which signifies how he has inbibed the best in the culture of the land without ceasing to be modern. Devotion and surrender to God, faith in goodness, love of country and respect for women-these and other qualities have taken deep roots in his being and found adequate expression in his works. He is a master in the art of story-telling both in prose and verse. His style is simple and direct, revealing an art that conceals art. *Binnaha*, *Aruṇa*, *Ṭāvare*, *Celuvu*, *Malāra*, *Sunīṭa*, *Manavi* are some of his collections of poetry. *Binnaha* and *Manavi* contain his devotional lyrics. Though they fall in line with traditional patterns of devotion, they are not merely imitative, pulsating as they do with feelings and ideas, that well up from the poets' genuine experience. More than having lofty imagery or intense passion, these poems and songs are sincere to the core and therefore natural and limpid in their manner. Two poems viz., *Tāvare* and *Celuvadevi* illustrate the typical response of the poet to life and nature. In the latter poem, a gorgeous sunset in the Vindhya ranges and a woman gone to a river to fetch water have given the poet a vision of beauty and taught him that the principle of beauty which wins our hearts is the human aspect of this world, a hidden conspiracy of the sport of the unseen godhead. *Malāra* is a bunch of more than eighty sonnets on events and persons. *Gowḍar Malli*, *Rāmanavami*, *Mūkana makkaḷu*, *Navarātri* are some of his narrative poems in verse. In *Rāmanavami*, the story is told of a village chief who believed that on Rāmanavami day, Rāma stood under the shade of a tree nearby along with Sīta and Lakṣmaṇa during his journey in exile and was seen on that day every year. This has led the poet to meditate on truth. He says, 'Truth is that which illumines our life. That which does not do so is only a dead doll of truth'. It means that that faith which sets you on the right track is truth, though it may be an illusion. In *Navarāṭri*, about 20 narrative poems on varied themes have been written in blank verse. Though it appears from the simple narrative flow that the verse here is very much like prose, a subtle poetic consciousness has by and large lent special charm to the stories.

Divakar

Ranganāth Divākar, a well-known nationalist and writer, has written a number of valuable books in Kannada, interpreting Indian philosophy and devotional literature. His small book called *Anṭarāṭmanige* is unique in its literary form, which resembles the *vacana* type of the 12th century. In 57 lyrical outbursts, addressed to the *Anṭarāṭma* or the inner self, we have the author's moods of introspection, devotion and ecstasy. In some of them, there are echoes of the past and the present. Nevertheless, the book is significant as a record of sincere self-expression on the part of a modern *bhakṭa*, who is not wedded to any particular creed and is eager to progress on the spiritual path.

Sali

Sāli Rāmacandrarao is one of the senior poets with an emotional frame of mind, which thrills to natural beauty and high ideals. He has generally followed the old tradition in his style and rhythms. We admire his ardent patriotism, passionate love of Kannada, intense love of nature and high sense of idealism, as reflected in his poems collected in his book, called *citrasṛṣṭi.* His style, which is generally soft and eloquent, rises to the occasion in describing the terrible aspects of life and nature. His fancy has at times risen to dizzy heights. His *Abhisāra* is a fine narrative poem, inspired by Tagore's poem on the same theme. *Tilānjali* is a moving elegy, born out of a personal bereavement.

D. R. Bendre (Ambikatanayadatta)

Bendre is well-known as one of the eminent pioneers of modern Kannada poetry and one of the greatest that modern Kannada has produced. Under his penname *Ambikātanayadatta*, he has written a very large number of lyrics and narrative poems, beginning with *Kṛṣṇākumāri.* From *Gari* to *Bāhaṭṭara* there are about 20 of his poetry collections published so far. Some of the collections have been put together and named *Araḷumaraḷu.* He has taken themes from the whole gamut of life; physical, vital, mental and supramental. Most of his expression is lyrical but there is a narrative continuity in some of his poems. For instance, *Sakhīgīta* is a longer poem, built round the story of his married life. *Mūrṭi* contains a series of poems with symbolic significance. *Hādu-Pādu* is an elegy woven round a personal bereavement. For some of his lyrics, there is the background of some imagined story or drama. They pop up their head like islands suddenly emerging to view from the sea-bed. It is difficult to say how far his poems reflect his personal experience as the texture of his composition is often intricate and elusive.

In a sense, the poems of Bendre are not mere emotional outbursts but intellectual exercises on the aesthetic level. They are loaded with significance pertaining to layers of experience and thought. In their best form, they are prismatic in character. They possess a mysterious charm, replete with suggestion, intellectual and mystical, without losing their lyrical quality. One of such great poems is his poem called *Bhāvagīte* i.e., a lyric on the nature of the lyric. *Hakki Harutide Nodidirā* is another poem with cosmic imagery, depicting the flight of the time bird. *Kuṇiyōṇu Bāra* symbolises the poet's vision of perfect joy as the all-pervading principle of life. *Ṭuṭṭina cīla, Kuruḍa Kāncāṇa* and a few others throw lurid light on the dire poverty and the glaring disparities in the life of our country.

In *Ṭuṭṭina cīla*, the despair of the hungry people has reached its limit and has found powerful expression in terrific words such as these: 'Building a tomb on the dead god, burning the incense of religion,

tolling the bell of breath and feeling the torment of death and pain, the inner, inner voice of the morsel-bag (i.e., the belly) of the poor is yelling, wanting to devour at one gulp the entire earth. In *Kuruḍa Kāncāṇa* the arrogance of wealth is pictured in creative imagery of the most heart-rending type. This poem is an example of how great poetry is born even in small-sized lyrics.

Bendre is unsurpassed in using colloquialism and loading it with significance. He has employed the varied pattern of folk poetry to great effect. He has experimented with all sorts of metre and rhythm including the vedic. There is a greater element of the abstract and the metaphysical in his poetry, thus making its diction often clumsy and involved. His intellectual theories and mystical experiences have entered into the very fibre of his being and writing, making it difficult even for a discerning reader to grasp his intent in its entirety. One observes an exuberance of words and rhymes in some of his poetry, which conceals the original essence. Notwithstanding these defects, a cosmic awareness, which is radical in nature and a thought-content, which is profound in meaning have informed his best poems. Kannada poetry has become the richer and has acquired a new dimension and an extraordinary lustre, with his poetic creations adorning its treasure-house.

Kṛṣṇaśarma Betgeri (Ānandakanda)

Ānandakanda, an important poet of the first band, derived inspiration from old Kannada classics and from folk literature. He commenced his literary career by writing patriotic songs during the freedom movement. Since then, he has written poems on the child mind, on nature and love. His *Muḍḍana mātu* was the first book of poems for children in Kannada. It reminds us of Tagore's *Crescent moon* in its portrayal of the child mind but it is not at all influenced by it. This may be cited as an example of parallelism in literature. In his two books *Virahiṇi* and *Odanādi* he has dealt with the age-old theme of love, its joy of union and sorrow of separation. He is the first poet to use the gazal tune in Kannada poetry. Broadly speaking, he excels in the happy choice of poetic diction more than in the conception of theme and imagery.

Śrīdhar Khānolkar was a poet, on whom fortune frowned all through his life. He was, however, undaunted by misfortune and he maintained his jolly spirit. Like *Ānandakanda,* he started writing during the national movement and kept up his narrative poems and popular ballads. In his poem *Bōyigaḷu*, he draws a touching picture of the poor and down-trodden palanquin-bearers. Still another poet, M. R. Śrīnivāsa Mūrti by name, has exposed the hypocrisy of the socalled religious people in his collection, *Yamana Sōlu.* Mainly a dramatist, Śrīranga has published a collection of poems called *Āhvānā* and made his caustic comments on life around him.

Cennamalla Halsangi (Madhuracanna)

Madhuracanna is a mystical poet of a high order. He added his own strain to the symphony of new poetry. Being born and brought up in a village, he did not receive formal education beyond the primary stage. But he educated himself by hard and sustained work and learnt some languages including English. More than anything else, he dedicated his life to spiritual *sādhanā* as a disciple of Sri Aurobindo. He delved into the depths of inner experience and wrote just what he experienced. His output is not considerable but the history of the *sādhanā* behind it is momentous. His significant work is *Nanna Nalla*, in which he has described his intense search for the Divine and the realisation, that came his way and brought him rare peace and joy. *Madhuragīta* is his saga of friendship. Poetry without spirituality has no meaning for him. Even his lyrics such as *Dēvatā Prithivi* are intensely spiritual.

V. Sītārāmayya (V. Sī)

V. Sī is one of the renowned poets, who struck a golden mean between the old and the new outlook on life and literature. In the 4 or 5 collections of his lyrics, we have ample evidence of the amplitude and the pliancy of his poetic sensibility. That is why we come across moods of atheism as well as of devotion and surrender to God, feelings of adoration for traditional values along with a call for drastic change and a new order. The most characteristic feature of his poetry is a visible faith in life and in eternal values, inspired equally by the wisdom of ancient India and the progressive thought of the modern world. '*Kasmai Dēvāya*', *Abhihi*, *Hemmara* are some of the poems, which represent his thought and vision at its best. As the poet is a worshipper of form, the inner essence sometimes gets blurred in the outward embellishment.

K. V. Puṭṭappa (Kuvempu)

Kuvempu is one of the top-ranking poets in modern Kannada, in whom lyricism and classicism have combined to produce rich and prolific poetry. Born on the lap of Malenāḍ, known for natural scenery, he rose to be a nature poet *par excellence*. He drew inspiration from the great sages of ancient and modern India as well as from eminent English and Indian poets. He sucked all the best from Kannada poetry of the past and enriched his thought and his vocabulary. In about 20 of his collections of lyrics, we come across a wide range of themes; but nature in all its moods dominates his creative world. Love of nature and love of the Divine are the two dominant emotions of his poetry. At times, they lose their distinction, one merging into the other. In his seasonal poems, we have some of the most charming descriptions of nature in lines such as the following:

'Hopping from flower to flower and sucking their honey, the bees singing call one and all "come, here's the spring". The winter's cold is retreating and on creepers, flower-laden, the joy-mad bees are buzzing like liberated souls. The cuckoo coos, the parrot chirps and here's the spring'! It is true that there are echoes, conscious or unconscious in some of his poetry. But there are beautiful adaptations in poems like *Kindarijōgi* which is based on Browning's *Pied Piper of Hamelin* and which sounds delightfully original.

The poetry of Kuvempu is rich in creation due to the poet's imaginative power, depth of vision and felicity of style. His best poems have given to modern poetry a singular charm. He is unsurpassed in nature poems. But lack of restraint and want of propriety have sometimes marred the beauty and grandeur of his poetry.

The greatest achievement of Kuvempu's genius is his epic, *Śrī Rāmāyaṇa Darśanam*, in which the poet has reinterpreted the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki in the light of his life-vision. Consequently, some of the incidents and characters have undergone a drastic alteration. The magnitude of this modern epic running into 23,000 lines and divided into four volumes is undoubtedly amazing. The work belies the contention that there is no scope for an epic of such magnitude in an age of lyrics, by which we characterise the present times. It is possible to hold the view that this is not an epic of the modern age, reflecting the aspirations and the limitations of the age, in which we live. But one must admit that no theme or form can be imposed on a poet and that he is entitled to his freedom to formulate his own vision in the pattern that he chooses.

P. T. Narasimhācār (Puṭina)

P. T. Narasimhācār is an outstanding poet, gifted with a fine sensibility. His poetic personality is characterised by a clarity of vision and subtlety of fancy. Peace in nature and peace of mind, arising out of an earnest effort for involvement in life and withdrawal from it have influenced his writing. Though he is open to the influence of the west in respect of the form and content of lyrical poetry, his urges are largely Indian. In his 7 or 8 collections, published so far, containing his lyrics and longer poems, he has depicted the delicate and the deep aspects of nature and the view behind the veil of life. By way of example, one may read the following lines from his poem, *Cikuhu* on the frequent cooing of the cuckoo: 'I hear this sweet sound as if it were a courier, sent by Indra, Lord of Amarāvati to bring back the heavenly damsel when she had forgotten heaven and when the earth was afraid that she might part company if awakened'. The poet has expressed the joy and the mystery of the infinite through his subtle imagery in this poem. In another poem, he used a modern image to describe the true nature and the high function of the poet thus: 'You are like the radio receiving set, "the spirit machine", which catches the song that is broadcast from the high transmitter—the "spirit machine",

which is fashioned by nature as an architect and which is capable of making audible the song of Śiva in the layers of distortion.' In *Rasasarasvati*, the poet has dwelt on the same theme at greater length. The flights of his fancy and the flow of his diction are evident in all his poems, though it must be said that at times he becomes too subtle and incomprehensible owing to a certain amount of clumsiness in his diction.

G. P. Rājaratnam (Ratna)

G. P. Rājaratnam is a renowned poet, who has distinguished himself by adding new strains to Kannada poetry. The novelty of his poetry is seen mainly in his collections entitled *Raṭnana Paḍagaḷu* and *Nāgana Paḍagaḷu*. *Ratnana Paḍagaḷu* i.e., the songs of Ratna are written in the colloquial dialect of an imaginary drunkard, who looks at life from his peculiar stand-point. This unique experiment in poetry is comendable not only for its complete realism and harmony between matter and manner but also for the deeper meaning, which it unravels to a discerning reader. One of his best in this line is a poem, called *Endad-tondre*, in which the topsyturvy world of the drunkard is nicely protrayed. He says, 'you wretched street. What is this disorder? Why are you dancing like mad with your body in bad shape? You have duped me and got dead drunk. You moon, why is your face slant? Yes, you are also drunk. The street lamps also are turning round and round, being dead drunk. It is a disgrace for me to be in the company of all these drunkards. I shall, therefore, go back to the liquor shop!' Rājaratnam has written a number of lyrics, which are collected in *Śānti*. He has also written nice poems for the children and made them popular.

T. N. Śrīkanṭhayya

T. N. Śrīkanṭhayya, an eminent Kannada scholar, wrote some lyrics, impeccable in matter and manner though small in number. About twelve poems of his are published in *Ṭaḷiru* and *Kiriya Kānike* which were among the very first collections of lyrics by budding poets. In his *Olume* he offered to modern Kannada a bunch of love-poems, in which he treated love with a naturalness and dignity worthy of admiration. In some of his poems like *Nētranatiyaru*, his fancy has built its mansion on the solid base of reality.

K. Śankarabhaṭṭa

K. Śankarabhaṭṭa is one of the noteworthy poets, sensitive to the sights and sounds of coast-line Karnāṭaka, where he was born and bred. He has 3 or 4 collections of poems to his credit. His imaginative and expressive power reached its high water-mark in *nalme*, a collection of long narrative poems, which are intensely lyrical. All the three narrative poems in this book deal with the tragedy of crossed love as

it occurs in different situations. In *Honniya maḍuwe* the theme is the tragic end of Honni along with her lover, caused by her refusal to marry a rich bridegroom, fixed for her. In *Mādriya cite* the pathetic story of Māḍri and king Pānḍu, who was afflicted by a curse, gives an occasion for the poem of love in separation and reunion. All the three poems show maturity of experience, thought and style.

V. K. Gōkāk (Vināyaka)

V. K. Gōkāk is one of the brilliant poets, in whom one can see a rare combination of the visionary and the realist. Nature on the fringe of the Malenāḍ has thrilled him. The mystical tradition in Kannada and English poetry has nourished his genius. Journey abroad towards the east and the west, residence in different parts of India and wide contact with varied people—all this has widened his horizon and enriched his experience. The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo has provided the base for his thought. The study of socialist idealogy has heightened his social awareness. He has opened one or two new paths in Kannada poetry and made unique experiments in form and content. In more than 15 of his collections we come across lyrics, longer poems and verse plays, set to a high key. His lyrics mirror the moods and thoughts of an aspiring and assimilating personality. In them, the high ideals of surrender to the Divine have sought powerful expression in intense language. The dreaminess of Shelleyan temperament is part of the poet's make-up. But it is noteworthy that he does not swing to any extreme and that he brings together all the different notes into his own symphony, as a result of his Indian background and his own *sādhanā*.

His journey to England on board the ship brought him face to face with the sea in all its moods and inspired him to write his songs of the sea (*Samudra gītagaḷu*). These songs, written in free verse, have been acclaimed as a rare gift to Kannada poetry, departing as they do from the conventional descriptions of the sea in old classics. Poems like *Naukayantra* occurring in this collection forestalled a new dimension and a new social awarness in the poet. It became more pronounced in *Abhyudaya* and *Navya Kavitegaḷu*. With the latter, Gōkāk came out with his modernist poems and ushered a new trend in Kannada poetry.

Dyāvāpriṭhivi and *Bāla dēguladalli* are two outstanding creations. In the former, there are two longer poems, one viewing the clouds from the earth and another looking at the earth from the aeroplane. Wealth of imagery and depth of vision have heightened the effect of the poem. In the latter, we have a series of wide ranging character-portraits silhouted against the background of modern life. The characters are presented as worshippers in the temple of life. It must be said that though the creative output in Vināyaka is rich in the ingredients of poetry, the expression is not always adequate to the experience. There is a kind of vagueness and unevenness in his style. While saying

this, one must not fail to appreciate the happy phrases and rhymes, which have adorned his poetry and which testify to a fusion of experience and expression in some of his best creations.

Rasikaranga

Rasikaranga is another poet, who has built up a personality, which is deeply sensitive to and fond of nature and life around. One of the abiding influences in his life has been old Kannada poetry in all its phases. In his lyrics, which have been brought out in four books so far, one can observe his love of beauty, faith in love, spiritual yearning and irrepressible optimism, undaunted by sorrow and suffering. He has written longer poems entitled *Cāṭakavrata* and *Jokkavana Jāṇi*. The former contains the story of the Chātaka bird as a new legend and symbol. The latter is a modern ballad in the folk style. The poetry of Rasikaranga has a delicacy and strength of its own. But at times it suffers from its limitations and is less than satisfying like a dark cloud, which passes off in a drizzle without a full downpour.

Īswara Saṇakal is a poet who has suffered most due to the onslaughts of poverty but who has outlived suffering and risen to noble heights, looking as beautiful as a flower, that breaks through hard rock. In his collection, called *Kōrike* he has not only unburdened his sorrow but he has also spoken of the nobility which sorrow has taught him. In one of his poems, he prays, 'let the world be laughing and gay and let all the sorrow of the world come to me. For will not the world take me in its arms when I weep? If I laugh and the world weeps, can I bear it?'

Simpi Lingaṇṇa is a close associate of Madhura Cenna, about whom we have written earlier, has translated *Milan* of the Hindi poet, Tripathi and has written lyrics and vachanas in the spiritual line. In his collection, *Mugilajēnu* we are struck by the catholicity of his outlook and the power of his symbolism.

Dinakara Dēśāi is a striking poet, who has written poems for children and shown great concern for the common man. His numerous *cutakas* (epigrams in verse) have become household word, containing as they do sarcastic comments on contemporary events.

K. S. Narashimhasvāmi is a poet of high order who has grown with the times and has kept his sensibility free from any influence or commitment. He became popular by his collection of poems called *Mysore Mallige* in which he did not feel shy to express conjugal love but did not come down from its dignified height. The restraint, the humour and the refined taste, which the poems in this collection reveal, gave love a status in society and literature. These poems bear an individual stamp though they are in line with similar writing by Bēndre, Kuvempu and other modern poets. In his later collections he shows a keen social awarness and a sense of satire and sarcasm which

is only softened by the artistic mould in which it is cast. Sometimes minor themes or incidents receive indifferent treatment in his poetry and the serious and the light styles get mixed up.

D. S. Karki, is a gifted poet, whose sensitivity is awakened by the beauty and mystery of the universe and who has tried to embody it in delicate rhyme and rhythm. His collections of lyrics contain some of the most appealing poems in his strain. His book *Bhāvaṭīrtha* contains poems of description of and admiration for the holy places and art treasures of the Kannada country.

S. V. Parameśvara Bhaṭṭa is another gifted poet, whose response to nature and life is in the best lyrical tradition. His poem on 'the parrots of Vijayanagara' is one of his best, which brings back to memory the glory of Vijayanagar through the imagery of the parrots which have ceased to be mere parrots.

Kṛṣṇamūrṭi Purāṇik is a poet whose writing on patriotic themes is forceful. He warms up when he writes about poverty, injustice and oppression. *Pejāvara Sadashivarao*, whose untimely death in Italy at a young age, deprived Kannada of a very promising poet, has left behind him a small but significant bunch of lyrics. 'Call to Varuna', which is a description of a rainy evening in Italy, is one of his most powerful poems, having a freshness and richness of imagery and diction.

It has not been possible to write even briefly about a number of poets who made a mark in their own way before the advent of modernism, beyond mentioning their names. Soem of them are Pāndēśvar Ganpatrao, B. H. Śrīdhara, V. G. Bhaṭ, M. V. Sītārāmayya and Vinīt Rāmacandra. They have made worthwhile contribution to modern Kannada poetry.

Gōpālakṛṣṇa Aḍiga is well-known as a major poet and as a prominent leader of the modernist movement. In a sense he is a vital link between the second and third generation of poets. In the first two collections of his poems, we have his lyrics, which may be called romantic. In the collections that followed, modernist poetry gained the upper hand. Whatever the label attached to them, the poems of Adiga are virile and progressive in their outlook and social awareness. The new trend becomes more pronounced and obtrusive in his later poems. It is in *Bhūmigīta* and *Candemaddale* that the modernist technique made much headway. Some of his poems like *Himagiriya Kandara* and *Gonḍalapura* can be acclaimed as typically modernist and remarkable in their form and content. Though we do appreciate the subtle imagery and the novel diction in such poems, we do not commend the artificially worked up style, in which English words and quotations figure and colloquialisms are interspersed with serious diction. Some of the poets, who are treading the modernist path with an individuality of their own are Rāmacandra Śarmā, Candraśēkhara Patil, Candraśēkar Kambār, Nisār Ahmed, P. Lankēś and A. K. Rāmānujan. A host of

younger poets are experimenting with the new technique with varied success. The free verse has been in the writings of some of them nothing but prose run riot and it is a mater for serious reflection whether it can be called poetry at all.

The third generation of poets has appeared on the horizon in recent years and more than a hundred collections are before us. Some of them are just first attempts while others hold out a promise despite their shortcomings. They do not bear any brand, romantic or modernist. Among women poets, prominent mention must be made of Jayadēvitāyi Ligāde, who has written two substantial works, one of them being a poetic biography of Siddharāmayōgi of Sholapur. Other names in the field are those of B. Jānakamma, Jānaki Baikaḍi, Pārvatīdevi Heggaḍe and L. G. Sumitra. It has to be admitted that generally speaking, women poets have yet to scale the heights of excellence in modern Kannada poetry.

This rapid survey of modern poetry would be incomplete without a brief reference to some of the poets of the new generation, who have made their mark. One of them is Cennavīra Kaṇavi, whose poetic genius is high and original in approach and style. As we proceed from one to another of his ten collections, we notice the intensity of his experience, and the novelty of his imagery and diction. The continuing sport of nature and love in myriad forms along with the hard realities of life and complex human nature have provided themes for his poetry. Both the romantic and the modernist moods blend in his self-expression and it is difficult to brand it by any label.

Another poet of equal capacity and promise is G. S. Śivarudrappa, whose poems disclose a sensitive and discerning mind. He has travelled from the romantic to the modernist in his theme and treatment. But he does not make a fetish of any one of them. There is a distinct originality in some of his creations. Among the other poets, Siddayya Purāṇik, Gangādhara Ciṭṭāl, H. B. Kulkarni, S. R. Ekkunḍi and Rāmacandra Koṭṭalgi deserve special mention. All these poets have been going up the ladder of success improving and progressing in their poetry.

Bendre has said in one of his poems that there are a hundred trees and a hundred sounds in nature and one is sweeter than the other. This applies to modern Kannada poetry and its rich and varied manifestation.

CHAPTER XI

THE SHORT STORY AND THE NOVEL

THE short story and the novel have registered a remarkable progress in Kannada during the last fifty years. The short short story and the novelette have also been in evidence.

Māsti is undoubtedly the first and foremost among the short story writers. More than sixty of his stories are published so far. He is a born story teller and there is an ease and exuberance in his writing. All his stories reveal a deep interest in the life around, a live curiosity for folk tales and a special regard for the culture of the Kannada people. Along with it, his horizon has extended to life and literature in India and the world at large. That is why he could write a story called *Ācāryara Paṭni* about the married life of Rāmānujācārya and also about of the last day in the life of Goethe, the great German poet. Some of his story material is taken from foreign countries like England, France and Japan. His stories called *Hemakūṭadinda Banḍa mēle* and *Gouṭamiya kaṭe* testify to his imaginative power in building a story on the basis of old material, which was suggested to him by Kalidasa's *Śākuntala*. *Subbanna* is his great short story, though it is longer than an ordinary story in length and canvass. It deals with the life and personality of a musician, who learnt the wisdom of life through his music. A very natural and informal mode of narration is the very essence of Māsti's art. In fact, his technique is the absence of any rigid technique. The best of his stories are known for the art that conceals art and not for any technical excellence as such. His achievement in the subtle depiction of human life and character, particularly the noble aspects of Kannada culture are all a matter of pride and admiration. His stories have acquired a certain flavour and value, which may be called 'Māstian' in form and spirit.

Some of the contemporaries of Māsti like Navaratna Rāmarao, A. R. Kṛṣṇaśāstri and S. G. Śāstri have shown a shrewd sense of reality, maturity of experience and simplicity of art in their short stories. The names of Kārant, Dēvuḍu, C. K. Venkaṭarāmayya and Ānandakanda are well worth remembering for their distinctive achievement in the domain of the short story as well as in other spheres. Kārant has severely exposed social evils and superstitions. Dēvudu has made a psychological study of characters, old and new. C. K. Venkaṭarāmayya has depicted some aspects of the life in city and village. Ānandakanda is among the first short story writers of North Karnataka, conversant

with rural life and folklore. His short stories, based on popular tales and inscriptional accounts, have an individuality of their own. The style of Ānandakanda displays a lofty taste and is marked by elegance.

Ānanda is one of the short story writers, who raised the status of the form by his mastery of its technique. In the 25 stories, written by him, 20 are original and 5 are adaptations. The technique of the modern short story has been ably handled in some of his stories, which are marked by rigour of construction, skill of dialogue, and above all by a sense of suspense and surprise in the denouement. But sometimes obsession with technique robs the work of its natural charm. Ānanda has excelled in giving a picture of happy married life and of the child mind. He has also tackled social problems and the tragedy that they result in.

K. Gōpālakṛṣṇa Rao, K. Kṛṣṇakumār and A. N. Kṛṣṇa Rao have dealt competently with several themes and enriched the Kannada short story. Gōpālakṛṣṇa Rao is more intent on character-study than anything else. Kṛṣṇakumār shows a very keen interest in life, including animal creation and his sense of detail is astonishing. A. N. Kṛṣṇa Rao is a severe critic of social ills and has a broad humane outlook. Bhāratīpriya is another short story writer of note, whose understanding of human nature and narrative art have been highly appreciated. Among those, who have lived in the countryside and portrayed rural life and character, Gōrūru Rāmasvāmi Iyengār, Mirji Aṇṇārao and Basavarāj Kaṭṭīmani deserve our special praise. Gōrūr has enriched Kannada by his pen-pictures of many interesting characters in rural life. Though all of them cannot be called short stories in the full sense of the term, they are as absorbing as good stories. Mirji Aṇṇārao has a fine grip over life-situations in the rural atmosphere. Basavarāj Kaṭṭīmani has drawn a grim picture of the life of the poor and suppressed people, living under famine conditions. He has raised his voice against inequality, injustice and oppression. Among others, H. P. Jōṣhi, Tengse, Śrīsvāmi and M. V. Sītārāmayya have made a mark in the field of the short story.

Those who have contributed richly to Kannada poetry like Bēndre and Kuvempu have distinguished themselves in writing high-level stories as well. Kastūri, Rājaratnam, Bīci and V. G. Bhaṭ have written humorous stories and short stories of real quality. Among the progressive writers, Tarāsu and Niranjana have projected their view of life in the treatment of the material, which they choose to depict. In the last three decades or so, a host of writers have come out with their collections, defying any attempt to offer even brief comments on them. Some of them have done competent writing but they have yet to go a long way in perfecting their art. Some others have already made their mark by their performance in certain sectors of the short story. Aswaṭṭha in particular has created a new record by extending the frontiers of the story to regions and places outside Karnataka. His writing shows an awareness of the technique without making it conspicuous. There is confidence and restraint in his character-delineation and description

of detail. L. Bēndre has suddenly shot into the lime-light by the able handling of his themes. V. M. Jōṣhi has further widened the scope of the short story by dealing with themes in greater India. His direct experience in the second world war on the eastern front and his observation of life in eastern Asia have enabled him to introduce variety of situation in his stories, in tackling which he has successfully maintained the interest of the reader. Vyāsarāya Ballāḷa has in his stories highlighted the freedom fight, the problems in the post-freedom period, including those of the partition of the country. D. B. Kulkarṇi has given to Kannada good stories of delicate character-study though sometimes they border upon character-sketches or personal essays. Among the recent writers, Yaṣawant Ciṭṭāl has shown exceptional talent and is on the upward trend. Women writers, who have entered this field, are on the increase but they have been still feeling the way. Some of them like Gouramma, Vāni, Geeṭādevi and Jayalaxmi have made a name by the deft handling of their themes.

Along with modernist poetry, modernist story also has set in. Formerly, there were but a few exponents of this trend like Rāmacandra Śarmā and U. R. Anantamūrti. Latterly, the number has grown and is growing. Rāmacandra Śarmā employed the new technique to great effect though it did not make for clarity. Similarly, in U. R. Anantamūrti's story collection, entitled 'The story that will never end', the modernist story has its best illustration in *Huliya Hengaruḷu*, in which the story carries its weight of meaning without being vague. It pounces on the reader as it were with its surprise at the end. But the inclusion of English quotations in the body of the story does not seem to us as inevitable.

This brief and rapid survey will give the reader a fairly good idea of the variety and the quality of short stories in Kannada. We have not included in our survey translations of stories written in other languages in India and abroad. We have also not touched upon children's stories and stories serialised in newspapers and weeklies. Viewed as a whole, the short story in Kannada is profuse and diverse. But it cannot be said to have transformed varied experience of life into good art, barring, of course, exceptions. Some of the good stories have in them some snag or the other, either hasty conclusion, lack of convincing quality or zeal for propaganda. It is, of course, a matter of pride and joy that there are some towering peaks in the field of the short story. Turning from the short story to the novel, we find that the scope has been widened further. During the last 25 years, the output of fiction has been tremendous with a tendency to increase so much so that it would be a tall claim if any critic averred that he had read all the novels in Kannada uptodate and was able to make a comprehensive assessment.

K. S. Kārant deserves the pride of place among the Kannada novelists. He has depicted several aspects of social life in more than 25 small and big novels. It is of great importance to note that he writes about what he sees closely and knows thoroughly. He has

almost taken a vow to write from first-hand experience. To gain this experience, he has travelled up and down the country and has particularly seen every nook and corner of south Kanara, where he was born and brought up. He has a fund of experience and he has given thought to problems of life. It is a chief trait of his personality that he has a stern sense of realism, though he is wedded to idealism in his own way. His realism is prompted by a sincere desire to see life as it is today in order to know how hard it is to build life for tomorrow. In a sense, all his novels are regional, as the story and characters move about in the regional setting, with which the author is most familiar. And yet some of his novels like *Maraḷi Maṇṇige*, *Bettaḍa Jīva* and *Kudiyara Kūsu* are intended to be mainly regional. *Maraḷi Maṇṇige* is his biggest novel, depicting the complex life in a poor family on the sea-coast spread over three generations. This is not an imitation of Pearl Buck's well-known novel *Good earth* though it may remind one of some similar features in both. The novelist has powerfully presented by his mature and masterly art a vivid picture of the changes that have taken place in our family life during the last hundred years and of the problems that have cropped up as a result of these changes. The regional background with the different moods of the sea have heightened the effect of local colour in this novel. Meaningful description of nature, expansive exposition of theme, marked by restraint, accurate character study and appropriate use of local idiom have combined to make *Maraḷi Maṇṇige* a great novel. In the vastness of this novel, we are amazed by a memorable delineation of women characters like Pāroṭi, Sarasōṭi and Nāgavēni, who stand before us as embodiments of the suffering, self-sacrifice and patience of Indian womanhood. *Bettaḍa jīva* is another successful regional novel though shorter in size than *Maraḷi Maṇṇige*. In it, plot, character and setting have been nicely blended with each other. *Kudiyara Kūsu* is midway in size but comes nearer to *Maraḷi Maṇṇige* in its magnitude. In this novel, Kārant has exhibited his great power of presentation in describing in all possible detail the life of the tribal people, known as Malekudiyaru, including their social and religious customs and their hunting adventures. The social and political problems, which the novelist has tackled in the course of his other novels, are numerous. Perhaps the most heart-rending picture in the world of his fiction is found in *Chōmane duḍi* which deals with the grim tragedy of an untouchable, destined to die without a piece of land which he can call his own though he yearned and strove for it. Others deal with the sorrow of widowhood, prostitution, discord in married life, political hypocrisy and selfishness and the sad plight of a school master. The narrative art of Kāranṭ was in its initial stages tinged with satire and sarcasm and tended to be didactic. It gradually grew to be disinterested and dispassionate. It has got the stuff of rich experience, a painter's sense of detail and a realistic and rational outlook. Kāranṭ has mastered the art of observing and representing life without much of personal projection. At times, he hurries through even a tense situation and lacks

conviction. All the same, he is one of our great novelists, of whom not only Karnataka but India can be justifiably proud.

A. N. Kṛṣṇarao is a gifted and popular novelist, whose novels are a rage with the reading public. He has written more than 100 novels on social and historical themes with a rare facility of expression. He has especially produced a series of novels on the life of an artist as painter, musician, actor, litterateur and sculptor. These novels throw light on the aims and ideals of an artist, the trials and tribulations that he goes through in the realisation of his ideals, his rise and fall. In his novel, *Sandhyārāga* which has been rightly acclaimed as one of his best, he portrays the character of Lakṣmaṇa as a musician, who breathed his last at the close of an excellent recital of an evening *rāga*, in mastering which he had spent all his life. In some of his novels, the author has upheld the age-old values of Indian culture and extolled woman almost as a goddess. In some others, he has given a lurid picture of the sordid realities of life in the modern context and painted men and women at their lowest. Three of his novels deal with prostitution as it prevails in big towns. They make ghastly reading. A. N. Kṛṣṇarao generally excels in creating attractive situations and maintaining story interest by lively dialogue. But his plots at times appear manipulated, the characters lose their consistency and there is an obsession with one's ego or one's ideology. If these defects had not been there, his novels would have gained considerably in quality and appeal.

T. R. Subbarao or *Tarāsu* is another talented and prolific writer. He has more than 30 novels to his credit, a majority of them being social. The historical novels written by him on the Pāḷegars of Ciṭradurga in a serial group have established his reputation as an excellent narrator, endowed with a rare historical imagination. *Hamsagīte* is one of his best, dealing with the life of a self-respecting musical genius, who lived at the time of the feudal lords of Ciṭradurg. A novel technique is used in this novel, by letting the story develop through the different accounts, recounted by different persons who had known the musician from their angle. In his social novels, *Tarāsu* has harped on the usual problems of prostitution and the break-up of the family system. In his novel *Puruṣāvatāra* however, he has taken up a new problem—the terrible life of an unclaimed orphan and depicted it to great effect. His narrative insight and skill are undoubted. But his art will be mature when he is more compact in his plots, more restrained and consistent in his character-study.

Basavarāj Kaṭṭīmani is a frank and forthright writer with more than 20 novels to his credit. He has dwelt on the freedom struggle effectively in two of his novels, as he was himself a freedom fighter. The conflict between the rich and the poor, the curse of untouchability, communalism, hypocrisy—these are some of the issues which he has boldly tackled in his other novels. He has spotlighted the life of the down-trodden and backward people, who were neglected by novelists till then. This has given a touch of newness to his stories and a

boldness to his writing. Very often incidents and individuals in actual life have been objects of his severe criticism in a different garb. Though this may be natural in realistic fiction, it is open to danger as it may affect the unbiassed integrity of the author. *Maṇṇu mattu Heṇṇu* (earth and woman) is one of his best novels in which there is stark realism combined with restraint and aloofness. Summing up, his novels voice forth a revolt against untruth and injustice and reveal an understanding of the various facts of real life. The value of his work would go up if he were to cultivate the disinterestedness of a true artist to a greater extent.

Niranjana is another novelist, who is reputed for his forceful writing. Besides stories and essays, he has written 20 novels, mostly social. *Kalyāṇa Svāmi* is his historical novel, describing the exploits of the brave people of Coorg, who tried in vain to wrest power from the British. *Cirasmaraṇe* deals with the bold part played by the people of Kerala in their struggle for freedom. In his social novels, the author draws a graphic picture of the life of the common people, who are helplessly groaning under social and economic disabilities. *Vimōcane* is one of his novels, which shows his grip over technique and his sense of character.

Kṛṣṇamūrṭi Purāṇik is already a well-known novelist with more than 50 novels to his credit. He has published many of his novels in the cheap book series but has not written them for cheap popularity. In fact, he maintains a certain level of art and tries to hold the balance between realism and idealism in his plot-structure and character-study. *Muṭṭaiḍe, Bevarine Bele* etc., are some of his good novels. V. M. Ināmdar is a competent novelist, who has analysed with a fine understanding of character and situation some of the problems of the educated class in more than 12 novels. His dialogues are specially fascinating. In his novel *Śāpa* he has handled with skill a new theme showing how the tainted life of the parents turns out to be a curse to their children. Mirji Aṇṇarao has written ten good novels focusing the reader's attention on life in the villages, based on his close observation. *Nisarga*, his very first novel, became very popular for its touching description of the suffering of a daughter-in-law in the spoken dialect of the people, living in the border of North Karnāṭaka. *Rāṣṭrapuruṣa* is a bigger novel, describing in great detail the fight for freedom as it was carried on in the villages of Karnāṭaka.

M. V. Sītārāmiah has dealt with current social problems in a simple and lucid style. Among women writers, Triveni has carved out a place for herself by the variety of theme and the high quality of her novels. The grasp of human psychology, which she displays in her novels, is admirable. In *Bekkina Kaṇṇu* and *Śarapanjara* two of her foremost creations, she has made a convincing analysis of mental aberrations and shown artistically how domestic and social factors cause them. M. K. Indirā and Gīṭā Kulakarṇi are some of the other women novelists, who have made a mark and are shaping well.

Some renowned writers who have shone in other forms like poetry, story and drama have made substantial contribution to fiction in the few works, that they have written. Some of them are among the topmost works of art. Ānandakanda was the first to write a social novel, called *Sudarśana* in 1933. Later, he wrote one more social novel and two historical novels. *Magaḷa Maduve* and *Aśānti Parva* by him are regarded as novels of considerable merit. Dēvuḍu wrote 4 novels, of which *Antaranga* is the first psychological novel in Kannada. *Mayūra* is historical, *Mahābrāhmana* and *Mahākṣatriya* are legendary. All these novels testify to the imaginative resourcefulness and the narrative skill of the author. Kuvempu has written two major novels *Kānuru Subbamma Heggaḍiṭi* and *Malegalalli Maḍumagaḷu*. Both of them depict on a vast canvass the life of the people in Malenāḍ with an astounding sense of detail and local colour. It is noteworthy that an eminent poet, considered to be romantic and spiritually-minded has shown himself as no less a realist in his fiction. V. K. Gōkāk has written his comprehensive novel, called *Samaraseva Jīvana* portraying accord and discord in conjugal life and filled it with a gallery of significant characters. Rasikaranga has written three problem novels, *Bāḷuri*, *Kāranapuruṣa* and *Anna*, treating respectively the problem of the educated unemployed, the problem of Karnataka and the problem of food in the Indian scene. Dramatist Śrīranga has written six novels, four of which are written after the attainment of freedom and are thought-provoking. In the earlier two novels, he has one on the fear of ghost and another is a sharp satire on society, woven round a slender story. K. Śankarabhaṭṭa has three novels of genuine merit to his credit. Māsti has written two historical novels viz., *Cannabasavanāyaka* and *Cikavīrarājēndra*, in which he has shown in a masterly manner how royal houses like Keḷadi and Koḍagu fell to the British by internal strife and moral degradation. A new, unexpected star on the horizon of the novel is K. V. Iyer. In his novel *Rūpadarśi* he built a whole mansion of art, replete with meaning, on the flimsy basis of a brief story. It deals with the attempt of that great painter, Michael Angelo to secure a suitable boy to serve as a model for his paintings on Jesus Christ. His another one '*Śāntalā*' is a brilliant historical novel, delineating as it does the noble character of Śāntalā, wife of the Hoysala king, Viṣṇuvardhana. B. Puṭṭasvāmayya has written a novel series on the last period of Kalyāna Cālukyas to serve as background for the reign of Bijjala and the life and work of Basavēśvara.

We do not claim to have made even a passing reference to all the novelists of note or to all the novels of real merit. We have only tried to acquaint the reader with some of them. Before concluding this chapter, we must refer to a few novels, which have made a dent in recent years. One of them is *Grāmāyaṇa* by Raobahadūr, which is a powerful picture of village life in its entirety and *Vamśhavṛkṣa* by S. L. Bhairappa, which depicts the conflict between tradition and modernity in all its aspects.

CHAPTER XII

THE WORLD OF DRAMA

IN THE earlier chapter, we have indicated in broad outline the origin and growth of Kannada drama. It may be said that though there were two or three original plays in the latter half of the 19th century and later, original play-writing started as a continuous stream from the twenties of this century. There have been several experiments in form, content and style in the sphere of drama. But the most notable feature is the sharp difference between the professional and the amateur drama and theatre. In the former, the entertainment value prevails, in the latter the art-value and thought-value predominate. Plays which are satisfactory from both the stand-points are rare to find. This has widened the gulf between the two. Verse play, musical play or opera, blank verse play and radio play—all these are galore. Besides, there are full-length and one-act plays, the latter being larger in number and perhaps better in quality.

Śrī gave an impetus to the production of poetic drama by himself writing *Gadāyuddhanāṭaka*, *Asvathhāman* and *Pārasīkaru* as adaptations of original works just as he supplied the stimulus to modern poetry through his *English gītagaḷu*. He had in him the genius to adapt works of art in such a manner that the adaptations appeared like original works. D. V. Gundappa wrote his drama, *Vidyāraṇya* as a readable play. Gōvind Pai's *Hebberaḷu* is a tense play about the famous *Ēkalavya* episode. Māsti has written 12 plays both legendary and historical. Of these, *Yaśōdhara* is in blank verse, *Citrāngaḍa* in poetic prose and all others are in prose. *Yaśōdharā* is about the best in his verse-plays and *Ṭālikōte* in his prose-plays.

Among the new dramatists, T. P. Kailasam was an exceptional genius and a phenomenon by himself. He rose like a bright star, appearing suddenly on the horizon of Kannada drama and created his own theatre and his own troupe. He wrote his serious plays in English on epic themes like *Ēkalavya* and *Karṇa*. But he wrote all his social plays, both serious and humorous in Kannada. To say that he wrote his plays is far from precise. Those who came in close contact with him knew that many of his plays had taken shape in the crucible of his mind. They descended on his tongue almost as finished products. In the course of some conversation, he would suddenly start reciting a play, perfect with stage-directions and repeat the dialogues with acting and intonation as if he was reproducing some one else's play from memory. Only some of them were reduced to writing,

others got lost. His first play *Toḷḷugaṭṭi* (Hollow and solid) brought about a silent revolution in Kannada drama as it gave a 'lecture'—a message through the technique of drama by upholding the essential values of life. It contained colloquial Kannada with a lot of English in it. In this play, Puttu is the book-worm and Mādhu is a broad-hearted sport. The contrast between the two brothers is beautifully brought out. At the end, it is suggested that the book-worm boy is hollow, though he may get a first in the examination whereas Mādhu, who fails in the Examination, but tends his sick mother, is really solid. In his preface to this play, C. R. Reḍḍi, a renowned critic, has said, 'Here is a diamond of the first quality and cut in the best style'. Though it is hard to accept this exaggerated praise, it must be admitted that it is the very first manifestation of Kailasam's rare dramatic genius. In his plays, several types of men and women have come in for 'X-ray treatment'—the hen-pecked husband, the political bluff, the briefless lawyer, the dominating wife and the orthodox widow. Perhaps *Sūḷe* (Prostitute) is the most powerful of his plays. In this play, Kailāsam makes a terrible impact on us by showing how prostitution is a curse, which can never be wiped out except by death. *Home Rule* is a smaller play, which brings out the nature of the unending conflict between the wife and mother of a *yajamāna* (master) who has to confess that 'There is only one master in the house and that is the mistress'. Though Kailāsam has created apt situations, live characters endowed with wit and satire in their speech, the plays are far from being perfect from the dramatic point of view as sometimes the situations are unnatural, the conversation of the characters is marked by uniform brilliance of intellect, the soliloquies are too long and there is an overdose of English mixture in the dialogues. Nevertheless, the genius of Kailāsam which blew like a wild wind on the Kannada land is something of a miracle, to be admired in the history of Indian and world drama.

Ādya Rangācārya alias *Śrīranga* is another dramatist of great ability and artistic resourcefulness. His contribution to modern Kannada drama is singular indeed. He has written more than 20 social plays, one historical play and many one-act plays. He is the first and foremost playwright, who subjected conventional society to severe criticism and stinging satire and advocated modern, unconventional ideas in the content of his social plays. He launched a virulent attack on religious hypocrisy and propagated his views on social reform through some of the leading characters, in his plays, which he wrote before the advent of independence. In all of them, we find an admixture of satire and fantasy, skill of long-drawn dialogue and punning on words. One of his best plays is *Harijanvāra* in which he exposes the double faced character of the head of a family, who talks of Harijan uplift as election stunt. In contrast to it, the author treats of the human kindness of his orthodox wife, who picks up a Harijan child from the gutter and saves it from death. In the period after independence, he has focused his attention on the power-grabbing mentality of the general run of

politicians and on the moral crisis, which the country is facing in all walks of life today. *Śōkacakra* is the significant play in the post-independence period, showing the contrast in the attitudes and ambitions of political workers before and after freedom. He has made several worthwhile experiments in stage-craft, including the introduction of two simultaneous scenes. In almost all his plays, he appears to have created characters, which act as his mouthpiece for the spread of his idealogy and for his own typical comments on all manner of topics. There is a queer mixture of the serious and the ludicrous in his technique. The dialogues sometimes receive our approbation by their subtle revelation of character and sometimes exhaust our patience by being overdone with puns and wits. On the whole, however, Śrīranga is a dramatist of original genius and resourceful fancy. He deserves a high place in the history of Kannada drama.

Kārant, who is a top-ranking novelist, has carried on his experiments in the field of drama as well and made his contribution to the Kannada stage. Two of his plays are full-length but the output of one-act plays is greater than full-length ones. The success of his experiments is mainly observed in his short plays. His special contribution lies in his verse plays and operas, which he has put on the boards and of which has made a success.

Samsa is another dramatist, who came very near to Kailāsam in dramatic genius. But they are dissimilar in many respects. Kailāsam wrote epical and social plays. Samsa specialised in historical drama. 23 plays which he wrote have come down to us. All these are based on events and characters, pertaining to the history of the Mysore rulers. He made a thorough study of this history and produced his plays with Shakespearean dash and power. One of his best is *Vigadavikramarāya*, in which the wicked machinations of an ambitious army chief to usurp the kingdom with an outward show of loyalty to the king have been depicted with rare dramatic skill. Similar power of character-analysis is seen in his other plays.

Some eminent poets have tried their hand in drama and achieved remarkable success. *Kuvempu* wrote two bigger plays based on Shakespeare's Hamlet and Tempest. He wrote a number of small one-act plays, all of them in blank verse. *Yamana solu* based on the story of Satyavāan-Sāvitri is his first play in blank verse, which is first in modern Kannada also. Most of these plays are inspired by legendary and epical themes. Bēndre has written two bigger plays and three one-act plays on social themes. They are all in prose. M. R. Śrīnivāsamūrti has written two plays in blank verse viz., *Nāgarika* and *Dharmaduranta*. In *Kuvempu's* plays we have evidence of his creative imagination and the felicity of his diction. In Bēndre there is a penetrating analysis of social problems and a scathing satire of human weaknesses.

Putina has produced verse-plays and musical dramas of high quality. He has taken his themes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Bhāgavata*. It is a distinctive feature of his writing in this genre that the

most proper metrical form or song-pattern has been employed by him to bring out the emotions in a particular context. *Ahalye* and *Gokula nirgamana* are good examples of his art of combining music and poetry. V. Sī has handled effectively older themes in *Āgraha* and *Sohrāb Rustum.* Vināyaka has not only written significant verse and song plays like *Mahāśvētē* and *Ṭīrada dāri,* he has also written full-length social plays in prose like *Jananāyaka* and *Yugāntara;* and a one-act farce, called *Vimarśakavaidya.* In *Jananāyaka,* the conflict between the private and public life of a leader ending in tragedy has been depicted through a series of tense situations. *Yugāntara* is a very new kind of play to Kannada as it delivers a message, embodying the synthesis of communism and spirituality in dramatic form. Rasikaranga has collected his one act-plays in *Eṭṭida Kai* and has written six full-length plays, both historical and social. His *Pāvanapāvaka* contains a set of plays, based on the dreams of *Jaḍabharata. Mūka bali* is a powerful play by Jaḍabharata on the pent-up sorrow and suffering of a young married woman. Kṛṣṇamūrti Purāṇik has given evidence of dramatic power in his small plays in blank verse like *Sairandhri* and *Rādhēya.*

Some of the dramatists who have written plays for the professional stage like B. Naraharisāstri, B. Puṭṭasvāmayya, Sadaśivarao Garuḍ and Kandagal Hanumantrao deserve mention here. Most of these plays are either legendary or historical. They have made a mass appeal on the stage and attracted large audiences, though their permanent value as works of art cannot be assured in all cases.

Among the writers, who wrote plays for the amateur groups besides Kailāsam, Śriranga and others, mention may be made of C. K. Venkaṭarâmayya, A. N. Kṛṣṇarao, N. Kastūri and others. Some of their plays have been good hits on the amateur stage, having real dramatic quality as different from plays of the professional stage. Some of the one-act plays by Enke, Kṛṣṇakumāra, Parvatavāni, Kṣīrasāgara and others have proved a success from the point of view of dramatic art and stageability. L. J. Bēndre, who has written both full-length and one-act plays though a late starter, has shown genuine sense of realistic drama. H. K. Ranganāth, Bīci, Śivaswāmi and a few others have specialised in the radio play. Ānandakanda and Enke have also entered this field in verse form.

The modernist drama is slowly coming to the fore along with the absurd play. It is sure to march ahead in course of time. The modern drama and the modern theatre in Karnataka have made considerable progress but they have yet to grow in all their aspects so as to fall in line with work in other parts of India. Experimentation has to go on in the social context of the region and blind imitation must be given up. The widening gulf between the amateurs and the professionals has to be bridged. Plays of quality must be made popular on the stage. Dramatists of today should take up the challenge of the times and use the theatre as a potent instrument of social dynamics without at the same time sacrificing the highest standards of art.

CHAPTER XIII

ESSAY AND OTHER FORMS OF PROSE

ESSAY, travelogue and other forms of prose have been ushered into modern Indian literature like the lyric and the short story under the influence of the west. For the lyric and such other literary forms, there is some kind of an old tradition. But there is no such tradition for the essay. In Kannada at any rate essay, especially personal essay is entirely new. And yet writing in this form has been of a good standard. We cannot as yet claim that it has been extensive and diverse though we can vouch for its quality. It first made its appearance in newspapers and journals and grew into a separate form in course of time. Probably the very first book of essays came from Vāsudēvācārya Kerūr in his *Nibandhamāle*. Afterwards, Gōvind Pai, M. N. Kāmat, A. R. Kṛṣṇaṣastri and other elders tried their hand at it. During the last 30 years or so, humorous and serious essays of a varied nature have appeared in print. But it is difficult to pinpoint them since the essay, the short story and the character-sketch are sometimes blended into one kind of writing. A. N. Mūrti Rao is easily the foremost writer of personal essays. His essays are published in collections like *Hagalu ganasugalu* and *Aleyuva mana*. Though his essays are limited in number, they are a model of the personal essay, emanating from the rich personality of the writer, being natural and dignified in its tenor. We can see at every step the imprints of a personal culture, which has grown with the years in sensitiveness and understanding. The style of these essays is polished but it attracts us by its transparent and pleasing quality. Next to him, Ānanda, a well-known short story writer, has written a small number of excellent essays, collected in his book called *Nanna prayāṇa sakhi*. Some of his other essays also are inspired by English essays. Two essays are, however, original. Bēndre, V. Sī, P. Ramānanḍarao and N. Kasturi and others have given to Kannada a rich storehouse of essays. If there is depth of thought in Bēndre, there is minute observation in V. Sī and character-sense in P. Ramānanḍarao.

In the next group, we come across an increasing number of essayists, who are developing in their way like Enke, HSK, Gadagkar and Wadappi. Though we find all the traits of a good essay in some of the writings of these essayists, the most important aspect is often lacking viz., a mature, circumspect and flexible personality with an individual stamp. At times, the humour is borrowed, superficial

or low in taste, and the level of the essay is ordinary. Among the recent essayists, R. V. Kulakarni or Rāku is a writer of high calibre. In his personal essays, he uses all the weapons of social satire, including bits of quotations from Sanskrit and Kannada poetry. His essays have won the esteem of critics as fine pieces of art, rated as high as those of A. N. Mūrtirao. The type of essay, which is reflective and personal at the same time, has developed in the writings of Śrī, D. V. G. Māsṭi, Gōvinḍa Pai, A. R. Kṛṣṇaśāstri, Bēnḍre, Kuvempu, Gōkak, Putina, A. N. K., Mālwaḍ and others. It comprises philosophic thought and literary criticism. In the essays of Śrī, there is a passion and fervour along with beauty of expression, whereas in the essays of D.V.G., there is clear logic and dignity of style. Māsti puts forward his thoughts and views in a very simple and telling manner. Gōvinda Pai is a master in writing learned articles of research value, though he has also written a few personal essays in the lighter vein.

A. R. Kṛṣṇaśāstri propounds his views in a systematic manner. Bēndre is a radical thinker, whose thought encompasses many facets and layers of experience. *Kuvempu* excels in descriptions of glorious natural scenery, which stimulate his thought. He has also written essays of appreciative criticism. Gokak analyses and integrates thought against the background of thinking in the east and the west. Puṭina has filled his personal essays with so much of reflective matter that they cease to be mere loose sallies of the mind. Essays on scientific topics have already appeared in a large number in journals such as *Prabuḍḍha Karnāṭaka.*

A form of essay which is satirical and humorous is gaining ground. It sometimes hides its foreign source and seems original. That apart, there is a good deal of original writing, published in humorous magazines like *Korawanji* and *Vinōda* and collected later in book-form. Kārant, Śrīranga, Kastūri, Gōrur, R. Śivarām of the elderly group along with the younger group consisting of Bīci, Nadiger, Sunkāpur, Dāśarathi Dīksit, A. R. Sēturām and Lāngūlācārya have enriched the world of satire and humour in modern Kannada. Among the collections of such essays, *gnana* of Kārant, *Ritusamhāra* by Śrīranga, *Upayavedanta* by Kastūri need special mention as they are excellent examples of original humour. Humorists have to bear in mind that borrowed or superficial humour, which may entertain for sometime, will not stand the test of time, if it is not genuine work of art.

Literary criticism is making headway and worth-while books are piling up. Māsti and D.V.G. were the earliest to enter the field. Later, Bēndre, Kuvempu, V. Sī, S. V. Ranganna, Gōkāk, T. N. Śrīkanṭaiah and other critics pressed forward. Some of the books in which principles of criticism are discussed are *Sāhiṭya* by Māsti, *Jīvana Soundarya Mattu Sāhitya* by D.V.G., '*Sāhitya Mattu Vimarse*' by Bēndre, *Kavikavya mahonnati* and other books by Gōkāk and *Artha Mattu Moulya* by V. Sī. '*Bhāratīya Kāvya mīmamse*', by T. N. Śrīkantaiah is a standard work on Indian poetics. As for books of actual

criticism there are those which concentrate on one poet like *Pampa-mahākavi*, *Rannakavi Praśasti*, *Harīharadeva*, *Āṇḍayya*, *Kumāra-vyasa Prasasti*, *Nijaguna swarūpa ḍarsana*, *Lakṣmisa* and *Muddana*. There are collections of critical articles on literary topics like *Kāvya-vihara* and *Tapōnandana* by Kuvempu, *Kāvya Samīkse* and *Samalokana* by T.N.S. etc. A remarkable survey of writings in all literary forms in modern Kannada literature was written by Shri K. D. Kurtakoti and published in *Naḍeḍu Banda Dāri* of Manōharagranthamālā and later brought out separately under the title *Sāhitya* and *Yugadharma*. There are any number of reviews appearing in weeklies and periodicals. But competent criticism, which is free and unbiassed, has yet to strike root in the Kannada soil. It is necessary to create a climate of opinion by constant discussion of the principles and guidelines of criticism.

In the field of research, valuable work has been done by scholars in the respective areas of their study. Foreign scholars like Lewis Rice, Fleet and Kittel did pioneering work in epigraphy, grammar and lexicography. R. Narasimhacarya published three volumes of *Karnataka kavi caritre* after years of laborious research and study. F. G. Halkaṭṭi brought to light the vast *Vacana* literature with admirable devotion and wrote books on the lives of Vīraśaiva saints. The contribution of A. Venkatasubbaiah, Govinda Pai, Rājapurohit to the study of the date and life of old Kannada poets can never be over-estimated. Sidrāmappa Pāvate, M. R. Śrīnivāsamūrti, S. S. Basavanāl and B. Śivamūrtisastri have laid students of Kannada literature under great obligation by editing and commenting on Vīrasaiva works. M. R. Śrīnivāsamūrti devoted his life to the study of Vīraśaiva literature and wrote scholarly books entitled *Bhakṭibhandari Basavaṇṇa* and *Vacanadharma sāra*. In this context, the interpretation of *Vacanas* and *Kīrtanas* by R. R. Divākar in his introduction to anthologies called *Vacana śastra rahasya* and *Haribhaktisudhe* deserves our need of praise. In text-editing, the systematic and laborious work of T. S. Venkaṇṇayya, T. N. Śrikanṭhayya, D. L. Narasimhācar, S. S. Bhūsnurmath and R. C. Hirēmath has paved the way for the study of old works. D. L. Narasimhācar's *Granthasampādane* on the science of text-editing is the first book of its kind in Kannada. The universities in the state, Madras university, Kannada Sāhitya Parisat and private publishing concerns have brought out good editions of old works with introduction and glossary.

Literature of travel has gained importance though it is not as yet vast in magnitude. The first book of travel abroad was written in the form of letters by V. K. Gōkāk and published under the title *Samudradāceyinda*. It was not a book of mere praise. It served as a window on the life and culture of the English people, their strong and weak points. *Pampāyātre* was the first travelogue by V. Sī, describing his visit to the ruins of Hampi. Kārant has written two very interesting travelogues viz., *Apūrvapascima* and *Abuvinda Barāmakke*, the first one about his journey in Europe and the second one about his

travels in India. In recent years, other travelogues, describing the experiences of journey to America, Russia and Japan have been published.

A good number of books have been written on history and biography. The first epoch-making book was *Karnāṭaka gatavaibhava* by Venkaṭarao Ālur, who was the father of the Kannada movement. His another book, '*Karnātakada Vīraratnagalu*' combines history and biography and is written in an inspiring style. Books, throwing light on the history and culture of Karnātaka, have been written by Pancamukhi, Lakṣminārāyaṇarao, P. B. Dēsai, and others. Biographies of great men like Caitanya, Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahamsa, Vivēkānanda, Tagore, Aravinda and Gandhi have attained a good standard. S. Kṛṣṇasarma, D. B. Kulkarni and H. S. K. are well-known for their success in writing biographical essays and pen-portraits of a literary character. In the few autobiographies, written so far, those of G. P. Rājaratnam, Kārant and Navaratna Ramarao are worthy of mention.

Scientific literature is mainly undertaken by the universities which are publishing small and big books on scientific subjects through their publication departments and are making valuable contribution to the spread of modern knowledge in the language of the people. The work of certain individuals like Śrī Narasimhayya, K. S. Savamur and Padmanābha Purāṇik in this field must be taken into account. The work of Mincina Baḷḷi granthamāle edited by Bindumādhava Burli in publishing more than hundred books on modern science and thought is highly commendable.

Original thought by way of expanding one's philosophy of life has found effective expression in the works of Karant, D.V.G., S. B. Jōṣi, and R. R. Divākar. S. B. Jōṣi's contribution to research on the early history and culture of Karnāṭaka in his books on the subject have elicited the admiration of scholars in the field. The Kānnada encyclopaedia is being published by the Mysore University in separate volumes. The very first attempts in this line were made by Kārant is his *Bālaprapanca* and other books. The first volume of the *Kannaḍa-Kannaḍa Dictionary* undertaken by the Kannada Sāhitya Pariṣat has been published already. Books on prosody and linguistics are brought out by D. S. Karki, R. Y. Dhārwādkar, H. P. Nāgarājayya and M. Cidanandamurti.

SUMMING UP

(Main features of Kannada Literature)

WE HAVE attempted in the course of this book to make a critical survey of old, medieval and modern literature in Kannada in brief outline. Old and medieval literature have been dealt with at greater length. Modern literature has been treated in about one third portion of the book. Though the period of modern literature is about 50 years from the beginning of creative activity in all new forms, the output has been vast and varied. More space is necessary to be able to do justice to modern writing. But it could not fit in with the defined scope of the book. Besides, no literary historian can claim to bring within his orbit all good writing.

It may have been clear to our readers from this survey that Kannada literature has an individuality of its own though it has received inspiration from Indian literature and culture from its very inception. However, it is necessary by way of summing up to mention some of its main features. It would be presumptuous on our part to talk of these features as characteristic of Kannada literature without an intimate acquaintance with other Indian languages and literatures. But Indian literature is so extensive and diverse that no single person can claim to have been intimately acquainted with it. Strictly speaking, no comparative assessment is possible under the present conditions of our knowledge. And yet it will not be wrong to mention some features on a tentative basis from what we have been able to gather about Indian literature from such sources as are available to us today.

It is a patent fact that Sanskrit language and literature are the most ancient heritage of our country. Next to Sanskrit, Tamil and Kannada are the oldest languages in order of antiquity. The earlier forms of both these languages clearly show that they were very close to each other to such an extent that they were nearly identical at one time. It appears that the proto-Dravidian parent language was largely compsoed of the oldest constituents of these two languages, though the part played by other Dravidian languages like Telugu also must be taken into account. There are indications to the effect that Kannada literature might have been in existence from the beginning of the Christian era. But they cannot be regarded as sure evidence. As we have shown in the early chapters of this book, Kannada literature must have definitely started on its career from 500 A.D. with a continuity of tradition during the last 1500 years. It is true that the quality of

any literature cannot be merely judged either by its antiquity or by the numerical strength of the writers. But both the facts help us to understand how ancient is the literary tradition and how deep and abiding is its impact on the life of the people, speaking a particular language. It is obvious that the value of literature in a language must be judged by literary standards only. When we look at Kannada literature from this point of view, the question arises how far it is original and free from outside influences. Kannada literature like the Kannada language has developed under the influence of Sanskrit from the earliest period that we know of. The first available work, *Kavirājamārga* is based on Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* though it is not a mere translation. The first classical composition, known to us is *Pampabharāta*, which owes its origin to *Vyāsabhārata*. His second work *Ādipurāna* is inspired by the *Mahāpurāna* of Jinasena. Many other authors in the later period have acknowledged their indebtedness to Sanskrit literature in one form or the other. Generally speaking, old literature is indebted to Sanskrit and Prakrit sources. They have, in particular, drawn from the *Upaniṣads*, *Āgamas*, *Purānas*, *Bhagavadgita*, *Rāmāyana*, *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata*. It is, therefore, true to facts to say that by and large there is no original theme nor any original viewpoint in old Kannada works. But in *Kabbigara Kava* of Āndayya, *Rāmadhānya Carite* of Kanakadasa, we have rare examples of inventiveness in point of theme. The literary value of a work really lies in the mode and manner of presentation, whatever the source, from which the theme or the viewpoint has been borrowed. This applies not only to Kannada literature but also to all other literatures, particularly of old times. The Kannada authors have assimilated the themes, chosen by them and exhibited their genius and learning and expressed their life-vision in their artistic creations, which are mostly of the nature of reconstruction. Sometimes, their works contain some new elements in plot-structure and new interpretations in character-study. In *Pampabhārata* and *Hariścandrakāvya*, for instance, we observe either a new technique of plot-building or a new mode of presentation. In the case of mystical or devotional literature like *Vacanas*, *Kirtanas*, Sarvajna's sayings and folk poetry, there is innovation in both form and content due to the inner experience and the individual genius of the saint-poet, though the original spirit is essentially Indian. Modern literature, though influenced by the west, has shown originality in conception and execution which varies according to the diverse experience and personality patterns of the writers concerned. In an over-all view, a certain recognisable temperament and approach to life appears to have manifested in Kannada literature through the centuries as a characteristic feature of Kannada culture. It may be defined thus. It lays itself open to all good influences. Though now and then it is carried away by these influences at the cost of its own tradition and culture, it generally maintains an individuality which reconciles native and alien elements and seeks a synthesis in its best manifestation. One of the main features of

Kannada literature is the synthetic outlook which it has fostered in resolving the conflicts in the Aryan and the Dravidian cultures as well as the tussle between Sanskrit and Kannada, the differing view-points of the east and the west. That is why we notice a diversity of religions and sects in its long history. Though this diversity has at times lead to conflicts and tensions, the great point about it is that it has ultimately learnt a new wisdom and sought a new harmony. Old Kannada literature has been a grand and noble vehicle of expression for all the faiths and schools of thought like the Jaina, Vīrasaiva,, Śankara, Madhwa and Rāmānuja. It has traces of conflicts among them as well as those of harmony, which outlived the conflict. The wealth and the glory of Kannada literature consists in the latter. It cannot be gainsaid that such an approach and expression are also to be found in the literatures of other Indian languages and yet we believe that they may not have possessed the diversity and the extent of vedic and non-vedic faiths and sects, which Kannada culture and literature welcomed and strove to synthesise. Along with such diversity in faith, Kannada literature has shown diversity in respect of subject-matter, literary form, metre and style. There are examples of it since its very inception. At first it was the classical trend that prevailed, in which the theme taken from the Sanskrit sources was given the pattern and polish of Kannada. It was followed by the indigenous trend, which took the theme from the Kannada sources and gave it a shape in the Kannada manner, though of course the influence of Sanskrit was not altogether ruled out. As a result of this, varied works in diverse forms have adorned the literary treasure of the Kannada land. There is still greater diversity in modern poetry. The modern writer does not work under any compulsion while choosing the form appropriate to his substance or subject. As a consequence new moulds and combinations have arisen in poetry, story, novel, and drama. Some critics have pointed out some of the short-comings while talking of the characteristics of Kannada literature. For instance, it has a good deal of sectarian writing, it contains too much of repetition, it has used poetic conventions to the detriment of real poetry, it has an excess of Sanskritisms and it indulges in long winding descriptions etc. These defects are common to old Indian literature in any Indian language. Kannada is no exception to it. In the literary situation, that existed in the past, this was to a certain extent inevitable. What is needed is to understand and appreciate the fact that Kannada authors tried to transcend their barriers and manifest their genius within the limits of the circumstances prevailing then. A grave injustice was done to Kannada language and literature by E. P. Rice at the beginning of this century. Though he rendered signal service to Kannada by writing his book on *Kanarese literature*, he spoke some half-truths and untruths in his last chapter on 'the characteristics of Kannada literature'. It is not intended here to discuss the whole issue threadbare. But it is pertinent to refer to one bold statement in it, which runs as follows:

'I am afraid it must be confessed that Kanarese writers, highly skilful though they are in the manipulation of their language, and very pleasing to listen to in the original, have as yet contributed extremely little to the stock of the world's knowledge and inspiration. There is little of original and imperishable thought on the questions of perennial interest to man. Hence a lack of that which stimulates hope and inspires to great enterprises'. If this statement contains truth, we agree that it must be confessed by those, who are lovers of truth. If it contains untruth, one has to admit that also. We have made an honest attempt to give a faithful account of Kannada literature belonging to the old period and it is for the impartial and unbiassed reader to find out whether the contribution of Kannada literature is 'extremely little' or otherwise. So far as we are concerned, we hold the view that Kannada literature has beyond doubt contributed richly 'to the stock of the world's knowledge and inspiration.'

In the history of more than a thousand years, poets and writers with a developed personality of their own have composed powerful works of art and uttered words of wisdom like 'All mankind is really one', (Pampa), 'This mortal world is the mint of the Lord' (Basavēśwara) 'Swim through and conquer' (Purandaradāsa), 'Treat others as yourself and there you are in paradise' (Sarvajña), and erected as it were columns of eternal light on the path of time as permanent sources of inspiration. Kannada people have been receiving inspiration from them and have been shaping their lives. Just as they must feel inspired by the best in other literatures, it is our earnest hope that others in India and rest of the world will feel inspired by the best in Kannada literature.

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